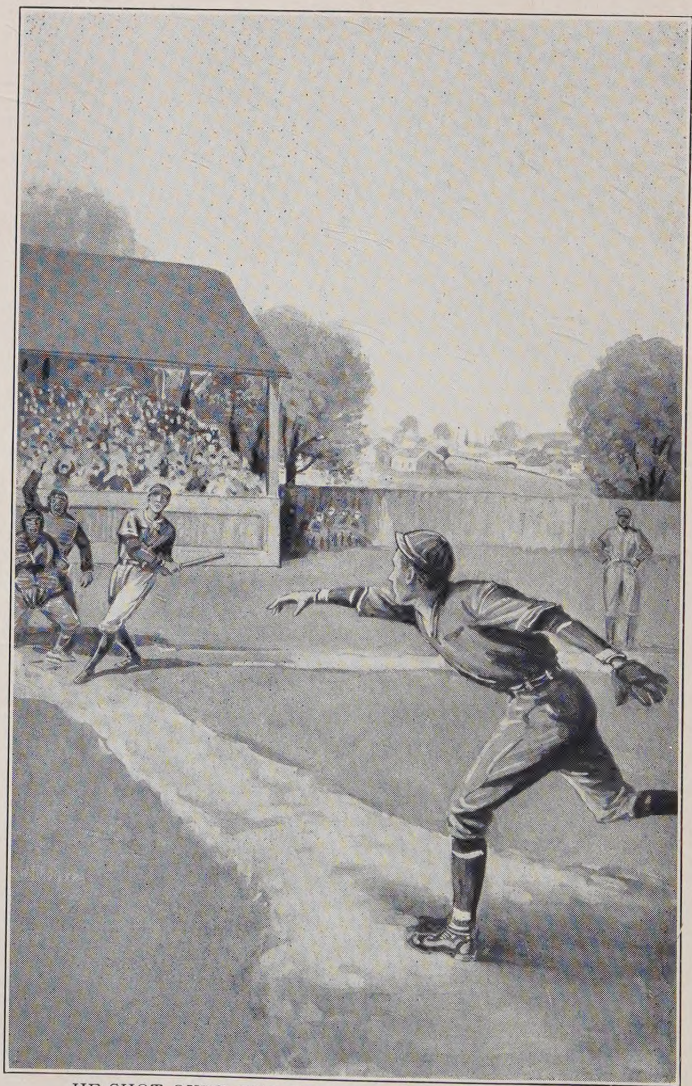


To Eddie Seghieri
from
Mother 8-3-32.





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HE SHOT OVER THE FADEAWAY, BUT ANDY MISSED
IT CLEAN.

Larry's Fadeaway.

Frontispiece (Page 198)

BUCK AND LARRY BASEBALL STORIES

LARRY'S FADEAWAY

OR

The Chester Boys Saving the Nine

BY

ELMER A. DAWSON

AUTHOR OF "THE PICK-UP NINE," "BUCK'S
WINNING HIT," "GARRY GRAYSON
FOOTBALL STORIES," ETC.

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BOOKS FOR BOYS

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BUCK AND LARRY BASEBALL STORIES

THE PICK-UP NINE
BUCK'S WINNING HIT
LARRY'S FADEAWAY

(Other volumes in preparation)

GARRY GRAYSON FOOTBALL STORIES

GARRY GRAYSON'S HILL STREET ELEVEN
GARRY GRAYSON AT LENOX HIGH
GARRY GRAYSON'S FOOTBALL RIVALS
GARRY GRAYSON SHOWING HIS SPEED
GARRY GRAYSON AT STANLEY PREP
GARRY GRAYSON'S WINNING KICK
GARRY GRAYSON HITTING THE LINE
GARRY GRAYSON'S WINNING TOUCHDOWN

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Larry's Fadeaway

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LARRY'S FADEAWAY

CHAPTER I

AN UNSAFE HIT

"BUCK to the bat!"

"Come on now, Buck, slam out a good one!"

"Let's clean up this scrub nine and quit!"

These were some of the cries that greeted Buck Chester as he picked up his stick from amid a pile in front of the bench on which his team members were sitting. Out in the field a crowd of Tooksville boys were doing their best to defeat the Resolutes, that snappy nine which had been evolved from a "pick-up" bunch of lads.

"Come on now, Sim! Fool him!" called Jim Donaldson, the catcher of the scrub team to his pitcher. "Let's get Buck out!"

"Swell chance you have!" chuckled Billy Barry, who sat on the bench next to Larry Chester, the brother of the husky lad who was

now walking toward the home plate on the Laurel Road grounds.

"Oh, Buck has been struck out before," commented Larry, who was not given to boasting or to making extravagant claims.

"But not by this bunch!" retorted Ned Powell, who was tapping the large end of a bat on a stone. He was up next.

"Well, no," admitted Larry. "Maybe not. But then this is just a bunch of fellows we got together for this scrub game. They're not used to playing as a team, and beating them isn't much to our credit."

"A lot of fun, though," chuckled Dick Wentwood.

"Sure!" assented Larry, as he watched his brother take his place while the rival pitcher wound up elaborately. Larry Chester fancied that he could detect in Sim Jendor an imitation of his own method, for Larry was developing a method strictly his own, one which, so his friends said, was destined to carry him well along toward stardom in the pitching ranks. "All baseball is good. But what did I hear you say?" he asked, turning to Jim Hutchinson, who sat near him. "Did you say 'let's clean up this scrub nine and quit'?"

"Well, I've had enough baseball for one day," admitted Jim, who was a substitute player on the Resolutes. "I haven't had a decent hit and Sim struck me out once."

"And you fouled out the other time," went on Larry. "The trouble with you, Jim, is that you don't care enough about baseball to keep at it sufficiently long to get the fine points. You could be a good hitter if you wanted to."

"I could? As good as Buck?" Jim was at once interested.

"Why not?" asked Larry. "Buck wasn't much good until he began to practice a lot."

"And now he's one of the best around here," chimed in Art Bailey. "Say, remember what a queer nine we had when we first used to play on these grounds?" he asked his chums, while the scrub pitcher and catcher were exchanging a few practice throws.

"The old 'pick-up nine,' as Roy Spencer and his gang used to call us," laughed Larry. "Sure, I remember!"

"But we sure put it all over Roy Spencer and his Hornets," said Fred Margot, as Buck now settled himself more firmly at the plate, ready to slam out a three-bagger and bring in Ken Bagwell, who was anxiously waiting on first. For, though this was the sixth inning of the scrub game and the Resolutes were five runs ahead, they were playing almost as hard and carefully as though great issues in a league depended on their winning this contest.

"Yes, there isn't much left of the Hornets," assented Larry. "Not since we exposed 'em for using those two professionals. But what I

was going to say to Jim was that I, for one, can't get enough of baseball. I wish we didn't have to stop for winter."

"Same here!" chorused several of the Resolutes.

"But we can't play much longer. It gets too cold," said Tom Baker. "Cold weather is all right for football, but not out on the diamond."

"Yes, I suppose we'll have to stop soon," agreed Larry regretfully. "But we can have a few more scrub games, just to keep in practice. Maybe three or four."

"Say, I believe you'd play ball in your sleep," commented Frank Allison, the substitute pitcher, and he laughed at Larry.

"Sure he would!" exclaimed several others.

"Not quite as bad as that," Larry answered. "But it sure is a great game!" Then he suddenly gave his attention to his brother, for the pitcher had made his first delivery and Larry wanted to see what would happen.

"Strike!" called the umpire, though Buck had not moved his bat. He smiled at the doughty little scrub pitcher.

"Strike!" gasped Art Bailey. "What do you know about that, fellows? Calling an outside ball like that a strike! Hey, ump——"

"Cut it out!" advised Larry in a low voice. "This scrub team isn't in our class and we've got to encourage them a little or they won't

play us again. What does it matter if he did call a strike on Buck?"

"That's right," agreed Fred Margot, the catcher. "Let 'em have something to cheer 'em up. Sim's working hard. It'll please him to think he could fool Buck."

"And Buck will get a hit when he wants it," added Dick Wentwood.

"Well, all right," assented Art. "Only I don't like to hear an umpire call a strike for a ball even in a fun game."

"Don't be too technical," advised Larry.

The scrub pitcher was clearly pleased with the decision and he smiled broadly as he wound up for the second delivery.

"Has he got anything?" asked Fred of Larry, indicating the scrub twirler with a nod of the head.

"Not very much. But he's ambitious and he has speed. What he needs is control."

This seemed to be so, for soon after the second delivery left the pitcher's hand the umpire called:

"Ball one!"

"Aw, have a heart!" pleaded Sim.

"I have," the umpire replied. "That was away out and you know it. Ask the catcher."

"Yes, it was away out, Sim," the scrub catcher said. "Take it easy now."

"Give me a good one and you won't have

to pitch any more," called Buck, with a laugh.

"What do you mean—not 'have to pitch any more'?" Sim demanded sharply.

"I'll knock it so far you can't find it," Buck retorted. "Come on, now, give me a chance at it!"

"You won't hit this one," Sim said, as he stepped forward to get the ball the catcher tossed back to him, at the same time giving a glance toward Ken on first so he would not steal second.

The pitcher closely examined the ball, as he had seen professional twirlers do, as if to ascertain whether it had started to rip, for a frayed thread on the horsehide will often spoil an otherwise perfect curve by the resistance it offers when going through the air.

"Come on now, another strike!" called the catcher.

Sim suddenly whipped the ball in with all his force. But Buck was ready for it. He and his mates were in perfect trim, for this scrub game was being played only about a week after the great victory of the Resolutes over the Hornets, a contest everybody in Tooksville was still talking about. So the Resolutes had had no chance to go stale and they welcomed this impromptu contest with a scrub nine which Larry had arranged to take place on the old Laurel Road diamond. This was where the Resolutes

played when they were, as Roy Spencer sneeringly observed, "a pick-up nine."

Crack!

That was Buck's bat meeting the ball right on the nose, and the sphere sailed wide and high, over the heads of the infield boys and away out of reach of the lad in deep right.

"Go on, Buck! Go on!"

"A home run!"

"Wow, what a hit!"

"I told you he'd smash it!"

These were only a few of the cries that greeted Buck Chester's performance with the stick. He dropped his bat and raced around the bases while Ken Bagwell sprinted for home ahead of him.

"Golly, that ball certainly has wings!" cried Larry, as he stood up with his chums to observe the flight of the horsehide struck by Buck. "Look at it go!"

"It's a homer, sure enough!" agreed Dick Wentwood.

The scrub pitcher made a hopeless gesture with his hands as he saw what had happened to his offering, and the catcher, taking off his mask, watched the right fielder race after the ball which was now bouncing down Laurel Road, that ran alongside the diamond.

But as Buck touched second and was headed for third he suddenly swerved and started for the road.

"What in the world—" began Larry, in surprise.

"Is he bughouse?" asked Art Bailey.

"Maybe a bee stung him," suggested Billy Barry.

Certainly, something had happened to cause Buck Chester to deviate from the course of running around the bases to bring in the home run he had so cleanly knocked. Certainly, something, unseen by the boys on the players' bench, had taken place to cause the scrub center fielder and his companion at right to run toward the road where the ball was now bouncing along.

Then to the Resolutes on the bench the reason became plain. An elderly woman was coming along Laurel Road, walking straight toward the swiftly bouncing ball, not observing it. In another instant it must strike her. But Buck and the two scrub players had seen the impending accident.

"Look out, lady! Look out! Duck!" shouted Buck.

She looked up in startled surprise, but did nothing to get out of the way of Buck's unsafe hit and would have been struck had not the ball unexpectedly crashed against a stone.

This impact sent it bouncing into the air, far over the woman's head so she was not in the slightest danger. But the shouts of the boys

and the whizzing over her of the ball so unnerved the fat woman that she fell and sat down in a puddle of muddy water beside the road.

"Oh, good night!" exclaimed Buck in consternation, as he saw what had happened. "This is a hot one!"

"Who is she?" asked Terry Black, the center fielder, as he joined Buck in running toward the woman in the mud puddle.

"Mrs. Peek. She's an acquaintance of Aunt Jennie's. I'll never hear the last of this!" Buck groaned.

"She isn't hurt," chimed in Bert Ramsey, the right fielder who had slowed up to wait for Buck and Terry, now that he saw there was no chance of catching Buck's hit.

"Maybe she isn't hit, but she'll be as mad as a wet hen!" Buck answered.

"She can't very well help being wet," chuckled Bert. "She sure is in the water!"

The three boys, with others of the two teams coming toward the scene of the happening, were soon beside Mrs. Peek. Buck reached out a hand to help her up, while Bert picked up her handbag. It had fallen on the edge of the puddle.

"I'm awfully sorry about this, Mrs. Peek," said Buck.

"Well, young man— Oh, it's one of the

Chester boys," she said, as she looked at him. "You ought to be sorry! Throwing a ball at a person that way!"

"I didn't throw it," Buck said, "I batted it."

"Huh! A lot of difference that would have made to me if I'd been hit."

"But you weren't hit," said Terry.

"How do you know, young man?" Mrs. Peek demanded tartly.

"If you'd been hit by a baseball you'd have felt it," said Terry.

"Besides, there's the ball over there, and it would be here in the puddle with you if it had hit you," said Bert.

"In the puddle! Yes, I'm in the puddle all right, and all on account of you reckless boys, too!" scolded Mrs. Peek. "I'll see about this! Something's got to be done about it! Oh, what a sight I must be! All muddy and wet and——"

"Won't you let me help you up?" begged Buck, leaning over with both hands extended. "You might get cold, sitting there in the water."

"Might get cold, young man! Yes, I very likely will get cold and I'll catch my death and it will be all your fault, throwing balls around that reckless way."

"I didn't throw the ball," explained Buck again. "I hit it with the bat. We were playing——"

"Nice kind of play, I call it, throwing balls

at poor old ladies and making 'em sit down in mud puddles!" broke in Mrs. Peek. "Yes, a nice kind of play! I'm going to see your aunt!"

"But won't you get up?" asked Buck.

"No, young man, I won't! I'm going to sit here until——"

Just then came an interruption in the shape of an excited small boy who rushed up Laurel Road from the direction of the Canico River. As he ran he shouted:

"Big accident! Steamboat *Twin Cities* smashed into a lot of other boats! Lots of people drowned! Oh, big accident! Terrible! Fearful!"

For one moment there was silence in the group of boys gathered around Mrs. Peek who was still sitting in the mud puddle. Then Larry Chester, with a startled glance at his brother, gasped:

"Aunt Jennie! She's on that steamer! Come on!"

Forgetting Mrs. Peek and leaving her in the puddle, Buck, Larry, and their chums rushed toward the river.

CHAPTER II

TO THE RESCUE

FORGOTTEN was the ball game, forgotten was Mrs. Peek, forgotten was the home run Buck Chester was in process of making when the woman had sat down in the puddle. All that the boys were interested in now was the startling news of the accident.

"What'd he say?" cried some of the Resolute players who had been among the last to rush from the bench. "What'd Ted Knowlton say?" Ted was the small boy who had come rushing up Laurel Road with the news.

"*Twin Cities* sunk!" some one volunteered.

"No, I didn't say the steamer sank," corrected Ted, who was running along with Buck and Larry Chester close beside him. "I said the steamer smashed into a couple of sailboats and a lot of people are drowned."

"That's bad enough!" exclaimed Tom Baker. "How'd it happen?"

"Don't know," Ted answered. "I was just coming to the ball game when Harry Bacon told me about it, so I came and told you fellows."

"Glad you did," panted Larry. "Though it may be bad news for us."

"Is the steamer much damaged?" asked Buck.

"She's sinking, I guess," Ted answered. "But slowly, maybe."

"That's fierce!" cried Larry. "Aunt Jennie is on board!"

"She is?" gasped several lads, for they knew the aunt of the Chester boys somewhat to their advantage, she having more than once given them doughnuts or pie or invited them to a good meal.

"Yes," said Buck, "she went out, intending to take a trip down the river, and was coming back to-night. Golly, I hope she's all right!"

"It would be terrible if she should drown!" gasped Larry. "Come on, Buck! We've got to get there and see if we can save her!"

The Canico River, on which the steamer *Twin Cities* plied up and down, carrying passengers and freight in a local service, was not far from the Laurel Road baseball grounds, and the crowd of boys was soon racing toward the scene of the accident.

Before the boys reach the place of the accident and start to do what they can in the way of rescue, a moment will be taken to tell new readers something about the two boys who are to play the major parts in this story.

Former readers will remember that they were

introduced to Elton Davis Chester (otherwise known as Buck) and his brother, Lawrence Dale Chester (nicknamed Larry), in the first volume of this series entitled "The Pick-up Nine; or, The Chester Boys on the Diamond."

In that book it was related how Buck and Larry, orphans, having been left about ten thousand dollars each by their father, went to live in the small town of Tooksville with their uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Henry P. Moxley. Their Aunt Jennie was the legal guardian of the boys. Henry P. was an odd type, a queer inventor.

Mr. Moxley had been a gold prospector in Alaska, and failing to make a "strike" there, had returned to the East and soon began to invent things. He made a mouse trap, a chimney-cleaner and a bird-cage swing, none of which was successful. But he got an idea for a dish-washing machine that, engineers said, had "possibilities." The trouble was it broke all the handles off the cups it washed. However, a firm was now negotiating to purchase the patent rights.

Buck and Larry had been interested in baseball as far back as they could remember. Larry was a natural pitcher and Buck had developed into a good center fielder and a batter of considerable ability.

The Chester boys and their chums formed what Roy Spencer, head of the Tooksville Hor-

nets, sneeringly called a pick-up nine, but there was a different story when this nine beat the Hornets and so interested a committee of sports-loving men in Tooksville that they outfitted the pick-up nine and laid out a good diamond for them along Laurel Road.

With uniforms, a coach, regular grounds, and all the accessories, the Resolutes, as they named themselves, went swimmingly along in baseball. They became the recognized official nine of Tooksville, dethroning the Hornets who had long held sway.

In the second book, "Buck's Winning Hit; or, The Chester Boys Making a Record," it is related how the Resolutes and the nines from Rock Haven, Leedport, and a military academy team from Manlius formed a league of which, after some hard games, the Resolutes became the champions. Having done this, a popular demand came that the Resolutes again play the Hornets, as that team had become rehabilitated and had gained the championship of another league Roy Spencer and his cronies had organized.

The Resolutes, thanks to Larry's fine pitching and Buck's batting, decisively beat the Hornets, and then it was discovered that two of the Hornet players were professionals, having been let out of a bush league for throwing games to gamblers. These professional rascals were run out of town.

Thus the baseball season had come to a glorious close for the Resolutes, and the present game, which had been so unexpectedly broken up, was in the nature of a post-season affair. The boys just could not stop playing, that was all.

"Well, I call this a pretty mess!" exclaimed Mrs. Peek, as, still seated in the puddle, she gazed after the boys running away from her. "A pretty mess! I'll see about this! Those Chester boys are always up to something! This is too much! I'll see their aunt and have them punished!"

She wished now that she had accepted Buck's offer of help in getting out of the puddle, but she finally managed to work herself out unaided and, wet and muddy, she walked off down the road in the direction of the Moxley home. She was in a rage.

Meanwhile, Buck, Larry, and the others were racing toward the river as hard as they could go. They saw other men and boys and a number of women and girls hurrying in the same direction, and now they could hear the hoarse call of the steamer's whistle as it blared out at short intervals.

"Must be a bad accident!" ventured Buck.

"It is terrible!" gasped Ted Knowlton, who had brought the news.

"If Aunt Jennie drowns—" began Larry, but he could not finish.

In a few minutes the crowd of baseball lads were on the bank of the Canico River. There they were somewhat relieved, for they saw the steamer *Twin Cities* (named in honor of Rock Haven and Tooksville) still afloat, though there was a hole in one side, luckily above the water line. The vessel was proceeding slowly toward a dock.

However, the accident was bad enough, for two smashed sailboats that appeared to be sinking were out in midstream, and scattered about were dark specks which seemed to be people swimming or floating. A number of rowboats were putting out from both shores of the river.

Buck and Larry reached a small dock ahead of some of their companions. Buck saw a rowboat and called to his brother:

“Come on! We’ll see if we can rescue any of them!”

“Sure!” assented Larry. “I guess Aunt Jennie is all right.”

He and Buck leaped in, and Larry severed the mooring rope with a cut of his knife while Buck fitted the oars into the locks. In a few minutes they were rowing out toward the scene of the accident to rescue some of the floating men and women.

“Look!” Larry cried to his brother, who was handling the oars while Larry steered, for the boat had a small rudder. “Look there! Over to the left.”

"What is it?" Buck asked, half turning to glance over his shoulder.

"There's a man in the water just ahead. He seems to be hurt. I'll put you over alongside. We can pull him into the boat if he doesn't sink before we get there. Pull hard!"

Buck pulled hard.

CHAPTER III

THE LAME MAN

“BACK water, Buck!”

Larry Chester called this when he saw that the rowboat, in spite of his efforts to guide it away from the floundering man by means of the rudder, was likely to strike him.

“Back water—hard!”

“Hard she is!” cried Buck, dipping in the oars and pushing instead of pulling on them, creating a swirl of water around the blades and effectually checking the progress of the craft. “Have you got him?”

Buck was looking at his brother in the stern and dared not lean over to see what was going on at the side for fear of doing some damage. He saw his brother turn and reach to get hold of the man in the river.

“I’ll have him in a second,” Larry said. “Pull a little on your left.”

Buck pulled, the boat swung around, and Larry, leaning over, caught hold of the coat collar of a man who seemed to be swimming rather feebly.

“Take it easy,” Larry advised him. “We

have you now. Come back here, Buck, and give me a hand. But don't lose the oars!"

"Right!" cried Buck, moving cautiously to the stern over which his brother was now leaning, trying to pull the man in. "He's hurt, isn't he?"

"Looks so," Larry answered, seeing some blood on the man's head and remembering the exhausted manner in which he seemed to be trying to keep his head above the surface.

"No, I'm not hurt—that is, not much," the man panted. "I—I just can't swim—my leg!" he went on. "Don't be afraid I'll upset you. I know how to manage a boat, even if I can't swim."

He seemed exhausted, and it is doubtful if he could have remained above water much longer had not Buck and Larry come along in the boat. Both the Chester boys knew how to manage a small craft and knew that the way to get a person into one from the water is not over the side, but at either the bow or the stern, to avoid capsizing.

"Heave him up now, Buck," Larry directed, as they both got hold of the man, one at either arm. "Can you give yourself a little boost, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, yes—surely—in a moment—when—when I—when I get my—my breath!" He was clinging to the stern where he rested a moment and then, with the aid of the boys, he

pulled himself up and over. He then slumped down on the bottom of the boat where the water ran from him in many streams. One leg seemed curiously bent and twisted.

"Oh, you are hurt!" exclaimed Buck impulsively.

"No, that's an old injury," the man said, sitting up. "But that lame leg of mine hampers my swimming and I never was very good at it, especially with all my clothes on. I was about to give up when you boys came along. I—I can't talk much now—a little later——"

The rescued man closed his eyes and leaned back against the stern seat. He seemed, Larry said later, as if about "to pass out cold." But he rallied by an effort, opened his eyes, looked at the boys, and murmured:

"If you could get me ashore—perhaps to the hotel—and maybe a doctor——"

"Of course!" cried Buck. "We'll row right back."

"Unless you see some one else that needs rescuing," the man suggested.

The boys swept quick glances around the river. Several other rowboats had now come out from shore and were gathered about the steamer and the two sailboats, both of which had careened and seemed on the point of sinking, or at least of floating almost submerged. The *Twin Cities* was proceeding under her own power to the Tooksville dock, and from the

fact that several small boats were now rowing away from her it was surmised that there was no need of any service to her passengers.

"Guess she isn't much damaged," observed Buck.

"No," agreed Larry. "And it's a good thing. Hope Aunt Jennie didn't get hurt in a panic or a rush, or anything like that."

"That's right!" Buck murmured. "We'll go aboard as soon as she docks."

"Did you have relatives aboard that steamer?" asked the lame man.

Now that he had his breath and had stood up to move forward and take a seat between Buck and Larry, it was seen that he limped. The lameness was evidently the result of some former injury, as, aside from a little cut on the head and the fact that he was soaking wet, he had suffered small harm from his immersion.

"Our aunt was on the steamer," Larry said. "She was going up to Leedport. But I guess the steamer turned back after the collision."

"That's right," assented the lame man. "She turned back."

"Were you on the steamer?" asked Buck. "Did you fall overboard?"

"No, I was one of a party out in that larger sailboat," and he indicated one of the two pleasure craft which took parties out several times a day from a Tooksville dock. "And I must say it was the fault of the man in the other

sailboat that the whole accident happened. He ran into us, and then we couldn't get out of the way of the steamer as she was coming into midstream. So she crashed into both of us. I hope no lives were lost."

"So do I!" exclaimed Larry. "It was a bad smash, though."

"I agree with you," said the stranger, who was rapidly recovering from the shock. "It came very suddenly, and all of us in the two sailboats were thrown into the water at once. It will be remarkable if none was drowned."

"I guess they started the rescue work quickly," said Buck. "We were playing baseball when we heard about it and a crowd of us rushed here."

"Oh!" The man's eyes seemed to light up with a sudden interest as he glanced sharply at both lads.

"Well, I guess there's nothing else for us to do," Larry said as he noted several other rowboats cruising about the submerged sailing craft. "Everybody seems to have been picked up. We'll take you ashore. Are you stopping in Tooksville?"

"Only temporarily. I had some business there and, with a few hours of spare time, I decided to go for a sail. I wish now I hadn't," and the lame man smiled.

"The doctor will soon fix you up," said Buck.

"Oh, it isn't that I'm hurt much," replied

the man. "Though I was pretty well scared when I saw that steamer bearing down on us. But I had a lot of papers in my pocket—business papers—and I'm afraid they're pretty badly soaked. However, I may be able to dry them out."

"If you want to come to our house, I mean where we live with Aunt Jennie, I'm sure you could dry your things there," offered Larry.

"Oh, thank you, I won't trouble you," said the man. "I still have my room at the hotel. Maybe they can get me an electric heater, or something like that, to dry my stuff out with. So if you'll just put me on the dock I'll be obliged to you."

"That won't take long," Buck said, beginning to pull again at the oars while Larry steered toward a wharf adjoining the one at which the *Twin Cities*, her trip interrupted, was now being moored.

There was considerable excitement when the Chester boys rowed up with one of the rescued ones, and this excitement increased as other craft came in with men, women, and children, some of whom had had very narrow escapes from death in the waters of the Canico River.

In fact, two women and a man were unconscious, and over these a squad of physicians, summoned from the town as soon as news of the accident was first circulated, worked.

The few police on duty near the river front

had had all they could do to keep back the throng of curious ones so the doctors could approach. But order had at last been gotten out of chaos, and when Buck and Larry, having tied their boat, helped their companion up on the wharf, there was a physician ready to look after him.

"I'm all right now, doctor," said the lame man. "These boys pulled me out just in time. That limp— Oh, that's from an old injury. I'm not really hurt at all. Just bumped my head when I was thrown out of the sailboat. You look after those who need you more than I do. I'll go on up to my hotel."

"We'll take you there," offered Larry.

"But don't you want to see to your aunt on the steamer?"

"We'll go to her as soon as we see you to your room," answered Buck. "I guess Aunt Jennie will be all right. The steamer isn't damaged much."

Buck and Larry soon had the man at the hotel and up in his room.

"Well, I certainly am obliged to you boys," said Lester Pomeroy, the lame man. "I was just about to give up when you came along. I'll see you again when I'm more like myself. I'm going to stay over another day, to get calmed down. So you play ball, do you?" He seemed greatly interested in this topic.

"Yes, we belong to a nine," Larry said.

"In a league?"

"Yes, we have a league," Buck replied. "Oh, it isn't one of the big ones, or even a bush league," he added, with a laugh, as he saw another question on the man's lips. "It's just a local league of teams like ours around here. Are you a ball player?"

"Who, me? No. That is—" He seemed to have difficulty in talking, and sank back on the bed, his clothes half off. His face was pale and through his white lips came the murmur:

"I—I guess I'd better have that doctor, after all. I—I feel queer."

Then he fell back limply on the bed.

CHAPTER IV

TROUBLE

"He's dead!" cried Buck Chester, with his usual impulsiveness. "Gosh, Larry, the man must have been worse hurt than he knew! He's dead!"

"No, he isn't," answered Larry, the cooler of the two. "He's only fainted. Skip downstairs and see if you can get a doctor."

Buck ran down while Larry tried to get off some of the man's garments which, he thought, might obstruct his breathing.

Buck did not have to go far for a physician, for one of the doctors who had been summoned to the dock to assist in reviving the persons pulled out of the water happened at that moment to be passing the hotel and he was soon working over Mr. Pomeroy.

"Just a faint from shock," the medical man said when the patient had been undressed and put to bed. "He'll be all right in a couple of days. Yes? What is it?" he asked, leaning over Mr. Pomeroy, who, having revived, was saying something in a weak voice.

The doctor listened to a faint murmur which

Buck and Larry could not distinguish and then said:

"Mr. Pomeroy wants you boys to come back in a day or so when he is feeling better. He has something to say to you. You'd better go now, and I'll give him something to bring him around."

The brothers left, and the man they had rescued seemed to compose himself for sleep. As they went downstairs Buck remarked:

"Wonder why he wants us to come back?"

"To thank us, though he doesn't need to do that," Larry answered. "What else?"

"No, I think he has something on his mind," stated Buck.

"Well, it certainly wasn't his hat!" chuckled Larry. "He lost that when he went overboard."

The boys were in a joking mood, now that they knew no lives had been lost from the steamer and that their aunt was safe.

"He wants to see us about something particular, I'm sure," said Buck. "I'd like to know what it is."

"Maybe it's about Uncle Henry's dish-washing machine," suggested the young pitcher, with another laugh.

"Can it!" advised Buck. "That dish-washing machine is as good as sold, Mr. Bloomingheim said. Anyhow, this Mr. Pomeroy doesn't know Uncle Henry is an inventor. We didn't tell him that."

“He might know just the same. Mr. Pome-roy is in town on some sort of business and he may have come to see Uncle Henry. Though I guess if he had we’d have heard about it. Anyhow, we’ll know in a couple of days. Now we’d better go and see if Aunt Jennie is all right.”

“Sure!” agreed Buck.

They found Mrs. Moxley and a number of other excited passengers leaving the steamer at the dock to which it had returned.

“Are you hurt, Aunt Jennie?” called Buck to her, as he and Larry met her coming down the long pier.

“No, I’m thankful to say I’m not,” she replied. “Nobody on board the steamer was hurt, but we were all pretty well scared.”

“And we might just as well be drowned as scared to death!” burst out an excited passenger—one of many—who was hurrying away. “I never had such a terrible time in all my life! I’m going to have my husband sue somebody for this! I surely am!”

“It was quite terrible while it lasted,” said Aunt Jennie, as she joined the boys and walked up the street with them toward her home. “I guess even the captain thought for a little while that his boat was going to tip over. I’m glad I was on the *Twin Cities* and not in one of those sailboats. Were many drowned? How did you boys happen to be here?”

"We were playing ball when we heard about the smash," Larry said.

"The first reports were that a lot had been drowned," went on Buck. "But I guess they got 'em all out safe. We pulled one man out ourselves, Larry and I."

"Did you? You two boys? That's wonderful! I'm proud of you!" exclaimed Aunt Jennie, with shining eyes. "Tell me about it."

Thereupon, taking turns, Larry and Buck related how their ball game had been interrupted just as Buck knocked a fine home run. But neither of them said anything about Mrs. Matilda Peek having sat down in the mud puddle.

They related how they had gone out in the rowboat and had brought Mr. Pomeroy ashore, detailing how he had fainted and how he had asked them to come back to see him.

"Pomeroy—Pomeroy," repeated Aunt Jennie musingly. "I don't remember that name."

"You don't think he would be having anything to do with Uncle Henry and his patents, do you?" asked Buck.

"I hardly think so. Yet you never can tell what schemes your Uncle Henry has in his mind. But I never heard him mention any Pomeroy. However, you'll soon find out, I dare say, what he's in town for. Well, here I am back where I started from without having gone anywhere," and Aunt Jennie laughed as,

with the boys, she walked past the Laurel Road baseball grounds, taking a short cut to the house.

The ball players had deserted the game with a rush on hearing of the steamboat smash, and no boys were in sight now as Buck and Larry came back. The bats and other paraphernalia had been taken in charge by the boys delegated for that purpose. So, having made sure that none of their possessions had been left out in the field, the brothers went on with their aunt.

When they came within sight of the house a figure sitting in a rocking chair on the porch attracted the boys. The figure was that of a stout, elderly woman. She had a handbag, splashed with mud, at her side. There was also mud on her garments and a little pool of water had formed around the rocking chair.

Buck nudged Larry but neither boy said a word.

Mrs. Moxley looked once at the rocking figure. She looked twice, and then she exclaimed:

“Why, that’s Mrs. Peek! I wonder what she’s doing on our porch?”

“Rocking,” said Larry, with a look at his brother.

“Rocking? Yes, I know! But why?”

“Looks as if she were waiting for—for you,” suggested Larry, again looking at his brother but speaking to his aunt.

“Waiting for me? I don’t know her well.

In fact, we aren't very friendly. She must be calling for something special or she would not be waiting like this," went on Aunt Jennie.

"I know what she's waiting for," murmured Buck in a gloomy tone to his brother. "She's waiting to make trouble! That was one of the worst hits I ever made!"

By this time Mrs. Moxley and her nephews were on the porch where Mrs. Peek, with a fixed, stern look on her face, continued to rock, little drops of water and little grains of mud now and then dripping from her garments and adding to the puddle under the chair.

"Good afternoon," greeted Aunt Jennie. "I'm glad to see you, Mrs. Peek. Won't you come in?"

"Thank you—no," was the very frosty answer. "I didn't come to call on you."

"You didn't!" exclaimed Mrs. Moxley, in surprise. "Then——"

"I came to see these boys!" snapped Mrs. Peek, and she pointed a finger first at Buck and then at Larry.

"To see my boys! What for?" asked Aunt Jennie. "What have they been doing?"

"Doing? They've been doing a great deal they shouldn't have done!" cried Mrs. Peek. "Look at me! Just take a look at me!" she went on in excited tones as she got up out of the chair and turned around in front of Aunt Jennie like a dress manikin in a store. "Look

at me! Ain't I a pretty sight?" Her eyes blazed and her voice trembled.

"Why, Mrs. Peek, you're all wet and all muddy!" cried Aunt Jennie. "You look—you look," she went on, innocently enough, "as if you had sat down in a mud puddle."

"That's exactly what I did!" cried Mrs. Peek.

"You did? In a mud puddle?"

"I certainly did!"

"My goodness! What a—what a peculiar thing to do, Mrs. Peek," said Aunt Jennie rather doubtfully. "Just why did you——"

"Good land!" shouted Mrs. Peek, whirling around so that some muddy drops from her skirt sprayed to the lower step, "you don't think I did it on purpose, do you?"

"Well, I was wondering," answered Aunt Jennie mildly. "But I couldn't quite figure out why——"

"Here it comes!" whispered Buck to Larry. "Old Man Trouble!"

A moment later the visitor, pointing an accusing finger at the boys, cried:

"They made me do it! At least that one did!" and she indicated Buck. "He threw a ball at me and it came so close to hitting me that I had to dodge it and then I sat down in the mud puddle. By accident, though, not on purpose," she said rather freezingly to Aunt Jennie. "It was all the fault of these ball-

playing boys. Then they ran off and left me sitting in the puddle. You ran away for fear I'd have you arrested, didn't you?" she cried to Buck.

"No, I didn't!" he answered a bit sharply.

"Of course we didn't!" asserted Larry. "We ran on account of the steamboat accident."

"Huh! Likely story, that!" sniffed Mrs. Peek. "I say you made me sit in the mud puddle and then you ran away for fear I'd have you arrested, and unless something is done about it I'm going to!"

"Old Man Trouble!" murmured Buck, while Aunt Jennie, clearly shocked by what she had heard, looked from one brother to the other and said:

"I can hardly believe this, boys. What does it all mean?"

CHAPTER V

A CELEBRATION

"HERE's how it happened," explained Buck Chester, in reply to his aunt's incredulous question. "We were playing ball, as I told you, Aunt Jennie. I knocked a homer. It went down Laurel Road just as Mrs. Peek came along, and I guess it whizzed close to her."

"Altogether too close, young man!" broke in the irate woman. "I'll teach you scamps to frighten me out of my senses! It's an outrage, that's what!"

"But we didn't mean to," put in Larry. "It was an accident."

"Accident! Huh! Likely story! You wanted to scare me, and I must say you did. Look at me! I fell right in that puddle! I'm a sight!"

"I'm very sorry," apologized Buck, as Mrs. Peek again swung around to give Aunt Jennie a good view. "It wasn't exactly my fault, for I couldn't tell which way the ball was going. But I'm sorry, and I'm willing to pay for having your dress cleaned."

"I'm sure he can't be any fairer than that,"

suggested Mrs. Moxley gently. "I hardly thought the boys would deliberately do anything like that, Mrs. Peek."

"It all depends on what you call deliberately," sniffed Mrs. Peek. "They certainly deliberately ran off and left me sitting in the mud puddle. Ran away and left me for fear I'd have them arrested."

"No, we didn't!" asserted Larry. "We ran because we heard there was an accident on the river and Aunt Jennie was on the steamer. We wanted to help her."

"A likely story! As if I'd believe that!" Mrs. Peek sniffed louder than before.

"Well, the accident happens to be true," said Mrs. Moxley, bridling up in defense of "her boys." Then she went on quietly: "I was aboard the steamer. I was making a trip, but I didn't get very far. We ran into some sailboats. It's a mercy nobody was drowned. So the boys are telling the truth, Mrs. Peek, as they always do, I'm sure."

"Well, maybe there was a smash on the river," conceded the angry visitor. "I'm not sure of that. But I am sure they made me sit down in a puddle. And look at the sight I am. I never saw the match!"

"It is too bad," agreed Larry. "But we'll pay for having your dress cleaned, and we certainly wouldn't have run away and left you there except for our excitement in wondering

what might have happened to our aunt."

"Well, all I've got to say," concluded Mrs. Peek, as she gathered up her muddy handbag and started down the steps, "is that you made me a lot of trouble. You're careless boys and you don't show very good bringing up, I must say." As she brought this out she glared at Aunt Jennie.

"Well, I like that!" cried Buck. "Not!" he added emphatically.

"Of all the nerve!" exclaimed Larry. "This takes the cake."

"Hush, boys!" begged their aunt. "I'm sorry you feel that way about it, Mrs. Peek," she went on. "I cannot believe that they deliberately did anything bad. It was all an unfortunate accident."

"It certainly was unfortunate!" sniffed Mrs. Peek, glancing down at her stained dress. "In my day boys weren't allowed to knock balls at old ladies. But I suppose the world is changing. I'll bid you good day!" and she switched away.

"If you'll wait a minute," Larry called after her, "I'll get the motorcycle and ride you home. Then you won't have to walk in that wet dress."

"Ride me in a motorcycle? I guess not!" cried Mrs. Peek. "I'd look a pretty sight at my age bouncing along Tooksville streets in one of those contraptions! No, sir! I'll walk

on my own legs as long as I'm able and when I'm not I'll stay in!"

"Well, maybe she's wise about that machine," said Buck in a low voice to his brother as Mrs. Peek went off up the street. "I'm not sure we could get it to going and we'd look pretty, with her in the side car, stuck in the middle of Main Street."

"It would be queer," chuckled Larry. The motorcycle was an old one their uncle had bought with the intention of using the engine in one of his inventions. But he had never done so and the boys had fixed it up for themselves. But it was an uncertain machine at the best.

"What's the matter, Aunt Jennie?" asked Larry as he and his brother prepared to follow their aunt into the house. He was impressed by the look on her face.

"It's that gossipy woman—Mrs. Peek," she answered. "She's the head of several church societies to which I belong, and I'm sure she'll spread bad reports of to-day's doings. It won't improve any with her telling of it, and we'll all get in the black books of a lot of people of this town, I'm afraid. Dear me! You boys are getting out of my reach," she sighed. "I can't manage you any more, you're getting so big."

"Oh, but Aunt Jennie! We didn't mean to do this!" cried Buck.

"It was an accident. Even running away and

leaving her in the puddle wasn't wholly our fault. She refused to get up. She didn't tell you that. It was an accident, Aunt Jennie, honest it was."

"I know it was, my dears," and Aunt Jennie smiled at them. "But that doesn't alter the fact that my boys are growing up—you are getting beyond me. I know you wouldn't intentionally knock Mrs. Peek into a mud puddle, but she'll make it seem that you did when she tells about it, and folks will say I haven't brought you up right."

"Oh, but you have, Aunt Jennie!" cried Buck and Larry together.

"I've done my best," she said, with a little sigh. "But you are certainly growing beyond me. I must talk to your uncle about you. I suppose something must be done."

"Something done?" echoed Buck.

"What?" demanded Larry, with a startled look at his brother. Matters were certainly taking a queer turn.

"We'll talk about it later," his aunt said. "I'm a little flustered now, with the accident and everything. I think I'll make a cup of tea. Oh, I can hear yet the screams of those poor people who were tossed into the water when the steamer crashed into the sailboats! It was awful!"

"But not a one was drowned!" said Buck. "That's lucky."

"And no one was much hurt!" added Larry. "It was very lucky. The sailboats are sunk, or almost, but they can be raised and fixed. If the steamer had gone down that would be a different story."

"Yes, I suppose I should be thankful for my escape," said Mrs. Moxley. "And I am. I'm just a bit flustered, that's all. I'll be better when I get a cup of tea. I wonder if your uncle has come home yet?"

"Was he on the steamer, too?" asked Buck. He and Larry had been out of the house most of the day, practicing and playing baseball.

"No," his aunt replied. "Your Uncle Henry went to Lynnport to-day to see about closing up that deal on his washing-machine patent. He said he might be home early, but I guess he hasn't come."

"If he had he'd have been out here on the porch talking to Mrs. Peek when we came up," suggested Larry.

"Not if he didn't want to get an earful of talk!" chuckled Buck. "That woman can say meaner things than an umpire!"

"Don't talk that way," begged his aunt. "At the same time I must say she has a gossip tongue! Oh, dear!"

"Don't worry," said Larry, putting his arm around Mrs. Moxley, who had been both a mother and an aunt to him and his brother.

"I'll feel better after I get a cup of tea," she went on, as she bustled about the kitchen, it having been established, by a visit to his workshop in the rear, that Henry P. had not returned. "Then I must take up the problem of these boys," went on Aunt Jennie to herself, as Buck and Larry went upstairs to take off their uniforms.

"Too bad we couldn't finish that game," remarked Buck, as he scrubbed some of the grime from his hands.

"Oh, well, it wasn't much more than practice," Larry said. "But we won't have a chance for many more games this year. So we ought to keep at it as long as we can."

"That's right," Buck agreed. "Well, we certainly had a pretty good season, winning the league pennant and all that."

"Sure!" said Larry. The remainder of his remarks were lost in a mumble and gurgle of water, for he was washing his face.

Supper time came, but no Uncle Henry, and the meal was served without him. But as he had said that if he could not close up the business he might not return until the next day, no anxiety was felt.

Buck and Larry went downtown in the early evening, to meet some of their friends and discuss the steamboat accident which gave Tooks-ville more to talk about than anything that had

happened since the Resolutes beat the Hornets and exposed the two professional players Roy Spencer had engaged.

"I wonder what Aunt Jennie meant when she said something would have to be done about us," said Larry, as he and Buck were getting into bed that night. Uncle Henry had not yet come in.

"Search me! But she sure seemed worried."

"I hope Mrs. Peek doesn't make trouble."

"She's just the kind that will. But never mind. We didn't intend to do any harm and all her talk can't prove that we did. But I hate to have Aunt Jennie worry."

"So do I!"

The healthy, heavy sleep of the brothers was disturbed, around what they judged was nearly midnight, by hearing a commotion in the rooms below them. Sitting up in their beds, Buck and Larry heard their Uncle Henry shouting:

"I've done it! I put it over! Hurray! Look! Look!"

"Good night! What's he invented now?" exclaimed Larry.

"Something's happened, that's sure!" cried Buck. "I guess we'd better go down."

As they slid out of the beds they heard their aunt saying:

"Henry, stop it! Behave yourself! The idea! At this hour of the night! What will

the neighbors say? It's disgraceful! Oh, will you be quiet?"

But Henry P. Moxley only shouted the louder:

"I did it! I'm going to celebrate! Where are the boys? Buck! Larry! Wake up! Come on down and help your Uncle Henry P. celebrate! I've done it! I said I would and I did! Hurrah!"

CHAPTER VI

THE PROMISE

BATHROBES and slippers were quickly donned by Buck and Larry Chester and, amid wonderings and conjectures as to what it was that caused their uncle to orate so, they hurried downstairs and into the dining room. There they saw Mr. Moxley lithesomely skipping around the table on which several objects were jumbled.

The first thing that caught the eyes of the boys was a pile of money, gorgeously colored bills, a considerable bunch of them. Around the greenbacks, with which were mingled the more pretentious yellow-tinted paper, were some new league baseballs in their red boxes, several bats, at the sight of which Buck's eyes opened, a big bouquet of flowers, several packages (apparently from a drygoods store) and a big box of candy.

Into this box Henry P. dipped his hand, and conveyed a big chocolate to his mouth just as the boys entered. At the sight of them, he capered more wildly and cried:

"She's sold, boys! She's sold! And there's

the money! Twelve thousand dollars! All in cash! It is all here except what I spent for these," and with a wave of his hand he indicated the balls, bats, dress goods, flowers, and candy. "She's sold!"

"Do you mean your new flying machine?" asked Larry, the while wondering how anyone would be so foolish as to pay money for what had been such a flat failure.

"No, not that. My dish-washer!" cried Mr. Moxley. "I sold the patent for twelve thousand dollars cash. Made 'em pay me in bills. I wasn't going to take a chance on a check. Boys, I'm rich, and I brought you all a few presents! How about it, my dear?"

He broke off to kiss his wife, but, with a laugh, she pushed him gently aside and said:

"Henry P. Moxley, behave yourself! Folks'll think you're crazy, carrying on like this at midnight!"

"I don't care if they do think I'm crazy!" he retorted. "'Tisn't every day I sell a patent for twelve thousand dollars—all in cash, mind you! Now we'll have something to eat and continue this celebration! Boys, I'm happy!"

He looked it.

"Eat!" cried Aunt Jennie, aghast, holding up her two hands. "At this hour of the night? I've never done such a thing in my life!"

"Then it's time you began!" chuckled her husband. "Why, in the city where I sold my

patent they don't think anything of eating at this hour and later. I left on the ten o'clock train to get here, and some of the restaurants were just opening. I tell you I've seen a lot of life! But come on, boys, we'll celebrate!"

At last Aunt Jennie gave in to his hilarious mood and the family were soon sitting about the table, eating a midnight lunch, the boys nothing loath and Uncle Henry so excited that he could only snatch bites between telling of how he had insisted on all cash for his dish-washing machine. He had really sold it at last, thanks to the good advice and recommendations of Mr. Solomon Bloomingheim, the Tooksville vacuum cleaner dealer, who took an interest in the affair.

What Uncle Henry did not tell, because he was not told until later, was that the concern which bought his patent did not really want to use the machine, for it had a way of breaking all the handles off the cups it washed. But the invention had certain valuable features, and it was these the concern paid twelve thousand dollars for. However, Henry P. was satisfied.

He bubbled over with enthusiasm as he told of the negotiations and how he had stopped to buy the balls, the bats, the candy, dress goods and flowers.

"I hope you'll like 'em!" he said, quite like a boy.

"These are the best balls on the market," de-

clared Larry, taking one out of its foil wrapping.

"And this is a regular Babe Ruth bat!" exclaimed Buck. "I'll knock out some homers with this when the next season starts."

"Do you like that color?" Uncle Henry asked his wife, as she held up a piece of goods.

"Oh, it's lovely," she said. "And these flowers are so sweet!" She buried her face in them and went on: "But such a time to get up and eat! Though I hadn't really gone to bed when I heard you coming," she said to her husband, smiling at him.

"Time doesn't matter when you're happy," he said. "I've got more ready cash than I've ever had at any one time and I'm going to do big things with it. I'm going to enlarge my workshop. I'm going to put in some lathes and other machinery. I'm on the track of another patent, and it's going to beat the dish-washer. I'll have to spend some of this twelve thousand, but I'll get it back, and more, too."

"Hadn't you better put it all in the bank?" gently suggested his wife.

"No, sir!" cried Mr. Moxley. "I have to make improvements in my shop to perfect this new invention. But here—that's for you, my dear," he said to his wife, peeling some yellow-backs from the bunch of money. "There's two thousand dollars for you to save—or do anything you like with. I guess I owe you that,

for there was some expense when you let me have the three thousand those swindlers nearly cheated us out of. So take this two thousand. And then I'm going to do something for the boys. It's all right for them to play ball, but they're getting along now and ought to think of business. I'm going to take part of this money and——”

He stopped suddenly, for his wife had nudged him, and, as he looked at her curiously, she said:

“It's getting late, my dear. I'm sure you must be tired and we had all better go to bed. We'll talk about the boys to-morrow.”

“Oh, all right,” assented Henry P. He was considerably under the influence of his wife. It was a good thing he was, as he admitted more than once. “But I'm going to do something for Buck and Larry,” he insisted, as he gathered up the bills after having given his wife the generous present.

“We'll consider that in the morning,” said Mrs. Moxley.

When Buck and Larry were again upstairs, with the balls and bats, the young pitcher said musingly:

“I wonder what's in the wind.”

“Why? Is anything?” asked Buck.

“I think so. Didn't you see how worried Aunt Jennie was about what Mrs. Peek said. And now, when Uncle Henry wanted to do

something for us, she put him off. I tell you, Buck, there's something doing!"

"Well, as long as I can play baseball, I don't much care what happens, Larry."

"There's something in that," admitted the other, with a laugh, as he got into bed.

The next morning Henry P. was so busy hustling around to see about getting his workshop enlarged that the boys had no chance to talk to him. Aunt Jennie hurried to the bank to deposit her money after giving Buck and Larry breakfast, saying as she was going out of the door:

"I want to have a talk with you later."

"I told you something was in the wind," said Larry.

"Well, let it blow!" was Buck's answer.

"Let's go down to the river and see if they have those boats ashore yet."

As the boys hurried down the street they saw Roy Spencer and his crony, Jake Hunter, turn a corner a little way ahead of them.

"Let's cross over," suggested Larry.

"What for?" Buck asked.

"Oh, we don't want to run into those two."

"Run into them!" exclaimed Buck. "I wouldn't mind running into them and knocking them off the sidewalk, the dirty professionals! Ringing in bush leaguers on us!"

"Oh, that's past and done," said Larry.

"Don't start a row now."

"I won't," promised Buck, following his brother to the other side of the street. "But, believe me, if those two start anything I'm going to finish it for them! They can't bluff me!"

"Oh, come on!" begged Larry, who was less inclined to fight than his brother. "Let 'em alone!"

Roy and Jake looked across and, seeing the two Resolutes, Roy sneered:

"There go the great ball players!"

"That's right!" mocked Jake. "I guess they think if they weren't around Tooksville would slide off the map!"

"Look here!" burst out Buck belligerently, as he started back across the street. "If you fellows think——"

"Cut it out, will you?" pleaded Larry. "Don't pay any attention to them. They're only trying to get you into a fight."

"They won't have to try very hard!" growled Buck. But in the end he allowed Larry to persuade him to continue down the street, though it was not easy for the husky young center fielder to pass the sneering laughter of those two Hornet players.

As if this was not enough to make their day start uneasily, as they passed down another street they saw Mrs. Peek—in another dress—talking to the Reverend Dr. Powell, the pastor of the church which they attended with their uncle and aunt.

"Do you see what I see?" asked Buck in a low voice of his brother.

"You mean Mrs. Peek? Sure!" Just then she turned and seemed to be pointing them out to the clergyman, though they could not hear what she said. The minister looked sharply at the boys and shook his head as if in disparagement.

"Looks as if she were giving him the low-down on us, doesn't it?" asked Buck.

"Sort of," Larry had to admit. "It's too bad you had to knock that home run. It's about the only one you've ever been sorry about, isn't it?"

"The only one!" Buck declared. "And, believe me, the next time I hit a ball on the Laurel Road grounds I'm going to look to see if Mrs. Peek is coming. If she is, I'll strike out!"

He laughed, though somewhat ruefully, and Larry joined in. Then they continued on to the river, watched the salvaging of the two sailboats, and walked back uptown. As they were passing the Mansion House they saw Mr. Pomeroy sitting in a chair on the low piazza that extended across the front of the hotel.

"Oh, hello, boys!" he called to them in genial tones. "I was just wondering how I could get in touch with you. Come on up and sit down." He indicated some chairs near his own and Buck and Larry were soon listening to his grateful thanks for what they had done.

"I didn't have the strength to thank you properly yesterday," he said, with a smile. "But that doctor soon brought me around. I'm all right now. Did I understand you to say, in what little talk we had yesterday, that you play baseball?"

"Yes, but not professionally," said Buck.

"No, I shouldn't say you were professionals," chuckled Mr. Pomeroy. "You're a bit young for that. I know the professional game."

"Do you?"

"Oh, yes. I was once a professional myself. I used to pitch for a couple of good teams," and he mentioned two in minor leagues of which the boys had heard. "I was a pitcher for many years," he went on, "and that's how I got this game leg."

"You don't mean you got a lame leg from pitching, do you?" asked Larry, with a smile. "If it was football now——"

"Yes, I dare say it seems a bit queer," admitted Mr. Pomeroy. "No, I didn't lame my leg pitching. But it was while a game was in progress. However, I don't like to talk about it."

Buck was going to ask if he had lamed himself sliding into a base, but the man's objection shut off that inquiry, and it had to be taken for granted that he had received his injury in a game.

As a matter of fact he had, but the game itself was not responsible. Later the boys learned that while at the height of his pitching career Mr. Pomeroy was standing on the side lines, when his team was at bat, when an automobile, guided by a reckless driver, charged into the crowd. Mr. Pomeroy, at the risk of his own life, pulled a woman and little girl out of danger, but in doing so he fell and was run over. It ended his pitching days forever. But he never would talk about it.

"Now you boys did me a big favor, getting me out of the river," he went on, "and I want to reward you for it."

"Nothing doing!" said Buck sharply.

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Larry.

"But look here," went on the former pitcher, "you boys must have spoiled your clothes, getting all wet when you pulled me out. I'm not a rich man, neither am I poor, and I certainly think it's up to me to pay for new suits to replace those you spoiled."

"We didn't spoil any suits," said Buck. "We had on our baseball uniforms when we got into that boat to pull you out. Water can't hurt them."

"Well, maybe not," agreed Mr. Pomeroy. "But I feel that I ought to reward you in some way. You did a big thing for me. What with my stiff leg and getting a knock on the head,

I was just about to give up when you rowed along. Won't you let me——”

“Please don't,” begged Buck, as he saw Mr. Pomeroy's hand go to an inner pocket as if to extract a wallet. “We really couldn't take anything.”

“Well,” went on Mr. Pomeroy reluctantly, “just as you say. But——”

“Look here!” burst out Larry. “All my brother and I care about is baseball—I mean in the way of sport,” he added. “We like to learn all we can about the game, and I especially would like to become a good pitcher. If you could show me something new in the way of curves or——”

“I'll be very glad to do that!” exclaimed Mr. Pomeroy, a happy smile illuminating his face. “That may be a way I can pay you back for what you did. I used to be a pretty good pitcher, if I do say it myself, and I'll be glad to show you what I know.”

“Why, say!” suddenly exclaimed Buck, as he remembered something he had read in one of his baseball books, “are you the Pomeroy that Christy Mathewson said could pitch the fadeaway almost as well as he could himself? Are you?”

“Perhaps I am,” admitted Mr. Pomeroy, with a little smile. “Christy Mathewson and I were friends. He was the great exponent of the fadeaway and he taught me all I know

about it. I never was his equal at it, and wouldn't be if I lived a hundred years. The fadeaway is rather a one-man ball, but I know something about it and I'll try to teach you," he said to Larry.

"Will you? Then I'll pull you out of the river again, half a dozen times if need be!" joyfully exclaimed the young twirler. "Say, it'll be great if I can ever throw the fadeaway!" he cried.

"Oh, I can easily teach you to throw it," Mr. Pomeroy said. "But it isn't easy to master and control."

"When can you start giving me some lessons?" asked Larry eagerly. "I'm not doing anything this afternoon, and if you could come out to the Laurel Road grounds—they're sort of private——"

"I'd like to, my boy; but I can't," said Mr. Pomeroy. "I am late in my business engagements now, on account of this accident. I am going on to my home in Broxley. But I'll write to you from there and arrange to see you again. I'll either come here or to some place midway between my home and Tooksville where you can perhaps arrange to see me."

"I'd travel farther than that to learn the fadeaway," said Larry. "All right, I'll wait until I hear from you, Mr. Pomeroy."

"It's mighty nice of you to do this," said Buck.

"Well, it was mighty nice of you to pull me out of the river," chuckled the former baseball player. "I appreciate that. What's your position, Buck?"

"I play center field."

"And he bats!" cried Larry. "His stick work helped us win a lot of games, and he was the one who really beat the Hornets a couple of weeks ago."

"Well, not knowing the Hornets I can't say much," said Mr. Pomeroy. "But good stick work is as necessary in a game as good pitching. I used to coach some of our men and, if you'd like, when I give your brother some pitching lessons I'll show you what I know about batting."

"I'll appreciate that," said Buck gratefully.

"Well, you'll hear from me soon. I'll write from Broxley," said Mr. Pomeroy, and he limped into the hotel while Buck and Larry went off up the street.

As the brothers walked along they saw two women just ahead of them and one said:

"Yes, I have decided to send him to the Broxley Academy."

Buck and Larry started and looked at each other. It seemed a strange coincidence that this place should be mentioned so soon after their talk with Mr. Pomeroy.

"Did you hear that?" asked Buck.

"Yes," answered Larry, "I did."

“And did you see who that lady was?”

“I didn’t notice.”

“It was Fred Margot’s mother. I wonder if she was speaking of sending Fred to the Broxley Academy?”

“Couldn’t say,” replied Larry. “All I know is that Mr. Pomeroy is going to write us from there. I never heard Fred say anything about it. I didn’t even know there was an academy there.”

“There is,” asserted Buck. “It’s a big boarding school. Gee, if Fred is sent there we’ll miss him on the team!”

“Oh, well, maybe it didn’t mean anything—what we heard,” said Larry.

But they were very soon to find out that it did mean something.

CHAPTER VII

THE WHIZZ-BANG

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Moxley."

"Oh, good afternoon, Doctor Powell."

Mrs. Moxley had just come out of her dressmaker's house when the minister of the church which she attended with her husband stopped her as she reached the walk.

"Lovely weather we're having," went on the clergyman, and to herself Mrs. Moxley thought:

"He didn't stop me just to tell me that—not just to talk about the weather. He has something on his mind and I can almost see Mrs. Peek there."

Sure enough, the minister went on in a more serious tone:

"If you aren't in a hurry, Mrs. Moxley, I should like to walk along with you and have a little talk."

"Why, of course, Doctor Powell. Delighted, I'm sure. I have just been in there," and she indicated the dressmaker's, "in consequence of some good luck my husband had in selling

one of his patents," and she briefly detailed the circumstances.

"That's very nice," said the minister, with a frozen smile. "Very nice, indeed. Mr. Moxley must be kept very busy with his patents these days."

"Oh, very busy, indeed, Doctor Powell. He seldom if ever takes an hour off."

"I suppose you are rather occupied too, aren't you?" The smile was just a bit less frosty.

"Well, with two big boys to look after, and an inventive husband, I don't have much time to sit around," replied Aunt Jennie, with a laugh.

"Ah, that leads up to what I was going to say," went on the clergyman. "I have just had a talk with Mrs. Peek, and she, ahem! she had rather an unfortunate accident the other day, I understand."

"Here it comes!" thought Aunt Jennie, with a sinking heart.

"Your two boys—your nephews—were in some way concerned with it," went on Dr. Powell. "I didn't hear all the particulars; in fact, in a busy parish like this I can't listen to everything. But I—er—I gathered, from what Mrs. Peek said, that your boys were rather mischievous. Now, my dear Mrs. Moxley, I know boys will be boys. I was a boy myself once." He tried to smile understandingly,

but it gave Mrs. Moxley the impression that if he ever had been a real boy, of which there might be some doubt, he had never worked very hard at the game.

"But pushing elderly ladies down in mud puddles hardly comes within the category of legitimate fun, Mrs. Moxley, do you think?" he asked, this time seriously.

"Buck and Larry didn't push Mrs. Peek down!" said Aunt Jennie indignantly. "She sat down."

"Well, perhaps, yes. But something they did about a ball—I didn't gather all the particulars—caused her to sit down."

"Buck batted a ball and, unluckily, it did go near Mrs. Peek," admitted Aunt Jennie. "But there was no occasion for her sitting down in the mud puddle. There were other places where she could have sat."

"Ahem! Yes, I suppose so, Mrs. Moxley. But what I was going to say is that Mrs. Peek thinks, and I must say that I agree with her, that you ought to take those boys in hand more firmly. Now, I put it to you as one who has the welfare of his congregation at heart. Don't you think so yourself?"

"Well, yes, Doctor Powell, I do," said Aunt Jennie frankly. "I know Buck and Larry are full of life and energy, and I can't manage them as I could when they were small. I was quite bothered about what happened to Mrs.



"DID YOU BOYS BREAK MY WINDOW?"

Larry's Fadeaway.

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Peek, and sorry for her. But I don't quite know what to do."

"Why not send them to a strict boarding school?" asked the minister.

"Send who?" asked Aunt Jennie rather sharply.

"Your nephews."

"Buck and Larry?"

"Yes. Oh, I know it may be a little hard at first," Dr. Powell went on, as he saw objection in Aunt Jennie's face. "But, really, it will be for the best. I am sure the boys are not really bad. What they need is some strict discipline of a kind their uncle does not apparently give them, and of a kind that you are too kind-hearted to inflict. Believe me, Mrs. Moxley, a strict boarding school will solve the problem!"

"Well, perhaps it will," admitted Aunt Jennie. "I never thought of that, I confess. And, really, Buck and Larry are getting too big for me. I will think it over."

"Do," urged the minister. "And I will tell Mrs. Peek she need have no further fear of what Buck and Larry will do. Not that they're bad; but discipline, my dear Mrs. Moxley, discipline!"

With a stiff bow he walked away and left Aunt Jennie in rather a daze. Still, she thought, it might not be a bad idea. She knew she would greatly miss Buck and Larry, for

they were good and kind and great company for her. Uncle Henry really was not very companionable, always busy in his shop at his inventions.

"I must think it over," was all the decision Aunt Jennie had arrived at when she reached home. The money question did not enter into it much. There was the boys' inheritance of ten thousand dollars each, and the court that had appointed her their guardian would allow her to use as much as she wanted of this for their education. Besides, she had some money of her own. And now there was the two thousand dollars her husband had given her. Yes, a boarding school was within reach if the boys would go.

"And if I can find a school where baseball is played, and that ought not to be difficult," mused Aunt Jennie, "I think Buck and Larry will be glad to go. Though I hate to think Mrs. Peek brought this about," she told herself.

As she was entering the house, she saw Buck and Larry out near her husband's workshop, catching a ball.

"Always at it!" said Aunt Jennie to herself, with a smile. She heard Larry say to his brother:

"Now, as near as I can make out from reading the book, this is how the fadeaway ought to be pitched."

"Let her come!" called Buck.

The ball thudded into his glove with a hearty ping.

"How was it?" asked Larry.

"Didn't seem very different from your regular out," Buck said.

"Well, it's got to be different," Larry declared. "Guess I haven't got the knack of it. I'll have to wait until I hear from Mr. Pomeroy. Now watch this one."

The ball came hurtling from Larry's hand, but something was wrong. He said afterward that "it had too much jump on it." Whatever it had, the ball sailed over Buck's upstretched hands, went on and on, to crash with a tingle of glass through a large window in the residence of Mr. Peterson, next door to the Moxley house.

"Oh, my gosh!" cried Buck.

"Good night!" wailed Larry.

Mr. Peterson thrust his head gingerly through the broken pane and irately shouted:

"Did you boys break my window?"

"I'm afraid I did," said Larry contritely.

"But I'll pay for it."

"You mean we'll pay for it!" cried Buck, accenting the plural pronoun.

"I don't care who pays for it as long as it's paid for," said Mr. Peterson rather sarcastically. "But it seems to me you boys could find some kind of fun other than breaking windows."

"We didn't do it on purpose!" retorted Larry.

"Of course we didn't!" echoed Buck. "It was an accident."

"Well, pay for it; that's all I ask," commented the irate neighbor.

As Buck and Larry gave over for the time being the practice on the fadeaway, they saw their Aunt Jennie on the steps.

"Sorry!" murmured Larry.

"It just couldn't be helped," added Buck.

"I suppose not," their aunt sighed.

As she went in the house, while the brothers began counting over their pocket money with a view to engaging a glazier, Mrs. Moxley said to herself:

"More trouble! Another reason for sending them to boarding school, I suppose. I must talk to Henry about it."

But she could get very little attention from Henry P. when she later went out to his shop. He was very busy on some "contraption" and did not want to be bothered.

"I think we must do something about the boys," began Aunt Jennie.

"Yes, yes! No doubt! Of course! I'll get them more balls and bats if they need 'em! Now let me see——"

"Oh, balls and bats! They have too many now! Henry, listen to me! It might be well

to send them to a boarding school. What do you think?"

"Yes, a boarding school, of course. Excellent idea! Excellent. I wonder if you would mind holding this bolt while I fit a nut to it. It keeps slipping on me."

"I might as well talk to the side of the house as to him when he's inventing," mused Aunt Jennie, as she did what he requested. "But perhaps at supper we can talk it over."

Uncle Henry was late, as usual, to the meal, and after waiting a few minutes, fearing that the things would get cold, Aunt Jennie said to Buck and Larry:

"We might as well eat."

"Sure!" agreed Buck.

"Did you get Mr. Peterson's window fixed?" Larry's aunt asked him.

"Oh, yes, it's in."

"I'm sorry it had to happen," went on Mrs. Moxley. "That, on top of what the minister said to-day, boys, makes me feel that, after all, it might be better to——"

She had no chance to say more, for just then they heard a strange noise from the direction of Uncle Henry's shop. It was like a small explosion. Then something popped in through the open window, sailed over the supper table, and smashed into a picture on the opposite wall with a great crash.

"Look out for the whizz-bang!" cried Larry, ducking, though there was no need of it.

"Well, for cats' sake!" cried Buck, pushing back his chair.

"Oh, what happened?" cried Aunt Jennie.

From without came the voice of Henry P asking:

"Did it hit anybody? Look out! Don't pick it up! There's more powder in it!"

CHAPTER VIII

OFF TO BROXLEY

BUCK and Larry Chester had started toward the object that had whizzed through the window of the Moxley home, smashing the picture, but at the warning words from their uncle they held back.

"Be careful, boys!" their aunt called from a safe position behind the dining room door. Uncle Henry came in, the usual black smudge on his nose, and hurried over to the smoking object on the floor.

"Henry! Let it alone! You said there was powder in it!" his wife cried. "Don't go near it!"

"It's all right! I've pulled out the fuse!" he announced as he picked up the object, a cigar-shaped cylinder with a small tube projecting from it. Out of this tube came a wreath of smoke. "No danger now. It won't go off, though it might have if I hadn't pulled out the fuse."

"What is it?" asked Buck.

"Looks like a sort of skyrocket," observed Larry.

"It is," said Mr. Moxley.

"Why in the world did you shoot it through the window?" asked Aunt Jennie, coming from behind the door. "The idea, Henry P! It might have hit one of us."

"It's only a small model and couldn't have hurt you much," said the inventor. "I really didn't mean to aim it this way, but it slipped out of my hands when I was testing it."

"Is it a skyrocket or a new kind of airship?" asked Larry.

"It's as near a skyrocket as anything," his uncle answered. "It's my very latest invention, and it's going to revolutionize fireworks. I'm going to build an immense rocket that will have a series of other rockets inside it. They will go off, one after another, each one shooting higher and higher until the last. That will be the greatest invention of all!"

Henry P. was waxing enthusiastic, but he had to stop for breath and Buck asked:

"What's the last?"

"The last rocket," said Uncle Henry, "will shoot out a sort of parachute that will hang suspended in the upper air and will continue to shoot off smaller rockets, Roman candles, red fire and other pyrotechnics for an hour or more. It will be the greatest and most spectacular piece of fireworks ever seen. I'll make a million out of this—not a measly little twelve thousand as I did from my dish-washer. This

is going to be great. You see this is how it works."

He approached his wife with the still smoking model that had come whizzing and banging into the room.

"Take it away!" she cried. "Go right out of the house with it!"

"It almost scalped me," Larry said. "Next time you shoot, Uncle Henry, yell beforehand, so we can duck."

"I'll test it out in the lots after this," said the inventor. "But it's going to be wonderful when I get it finished. I'll be a millionaire before long."

"Well, come to supper," begged Aunt Jennie. "And, for mercy's sake, wash your face! Suppose some one should come in!"

She went out to dish up her husband's meal as he hurried to the bathroom, having set the smelly and still smouldering "rocket" out on the back porch.

"As bad as the boys to manage, every bit," sighed Aunt Jennie, thinking of Henry P. as she filled his plate. "I wonder how it would do to send him to boarding school for a while," and she smiled.

Buck and Larry were more interested in their uncle's fireworks invention than they had ever been in any of his other schemes and after supper they went out to the shop with him, after making solemn promises to their aunt

that they would not do any more damage to themselves or to the property in the neighborhood.

"And don't you shoot off any more sample rockets," she stipulated to her husband.

"No, Jennie, I won't," he promised.

Mrs. Moxley had no more than got the supper dishes washed when the doorbell rang.

"Dear me," she murmured as she hurried through the front hall. "I hope there aren't any more windows broken or women falling into mud puddles. I declare my nerves are all on edge. Oh, do come in, Mrs. Margot!" she said, when she saw the mother of Fred, the catcher on the Resolute nine. "I'm glad to see you. But don't tell me Buck and Larry have been pushing *you* into a mud puddle!"

"Why, no, of course not!"

"Or breaking your windows?"

"No. In fact, Buck and Larry haven't been near our house for several days, though generally Fred and they are as thick as mush. But it's Fred. He works after school and most of the days in vacation for Mr. Chase, the grocer."

"Yes, I know," assented Mrs. Moxley. "Fred often brings in my orders."

"Well, he won't bring in any more!" said Mrs. Margot, with a grim tightening of her lips.

"Why not?"

"Because he's lost his job. Mr. Chase said he'd put up with enough and too much from Fred. He said, Mr. Chase did, that he didn't so much mind Fred's putting mud turtles in the bags of potatoes or painting funny faces on the squashes that Fred delivered. But when it came to tying a puppy up in a sack that should have held flour and leaving it at the minister's house—that, Mr. Chase said, was the straw that broke the elephant's back, or maybe it was camel's."

"Then Buck and Larry didn't have anything to do with it!" exclaimed Aunt Jennie, in a relieved voice.

"No, of course they didn't. It was Fred alone. So I've decided to send him away and I came to ask if you didn't think it was a good idea, you having two boys of your own, so to speak, while I've only one. Of course there's Lulu, but she's a girl."

"Yes, of course," assented Aunt Jennie. "But send Fred away! Where?"

"To boarding school."

"Boarding school!" exclaimed Aunt Jennie, with considerable emphasis, since the same thing had been proposed about Buck and Larry.

"Yes, boarding school. Fred's father and I have talked it over. This about the flour occurred several days ago. We sent for some circulars of different schools around here, and

this is the one I like best. I thought maybe you might have heard of it."

"Broxley Academy," murmured Mrs. Moxley, looking through the illustrated catalog her visitor handed her. "No, I never heard of it. But it seems to be a nice sort of place. Lots of boys there, and plenty of room to play," she added, turning to a page showing a crowd of lads on a football field while the adjoining picture showed a baseball game in progress.

"Yes, that's what the boys need—lots of room," said Mrs. Margot. "Well, if you don't know anything about this place you can't help me any. But Fred's father and I have practically decided to send him to Broxley."

"I think he'll enjoy it. I wonder if you would leave this catalog with me, Mrs. Margot?" asked Aunt Jennie.

"You may keep it. Though I guess Fred will like to look it over again before he goes. Were you thinking——"

Mrs. Moxley went to the window that opened on the side of the house next to the workshop. She could see, by the shadows, that Buck and Larry were still with their uncle.

"I haven't said anything about it to them yet," she informed her visitor in a low voice; "but I have about made up my mind to send Buck and Larry away to school. They're getting beyond me. Now if Fred is going to Brox-

ley, I know Buck and Larry would ask nothing better than to be at the same school."

"Yes, they are great friends."

"So," went on Aunt Jennie, "if you'll leave this catalog with me I will talk it over with Henry, though, really, I might as well talk to the tea kettle. But I think something may come of this."

"I hope it does," said Mrs. Margot. "If anything will reconcile Fred to going away it will be that Buck and Larry go too."

The two women visited for a while longer. When Mrs. Margot left, Aunt Jennie, with a smile on her face, put the school catalog on the table and partly covered it with the evening paper. This was just before she heard Buck and Larry coming in with their Uncle Henry.

"Hello, what's this?" exclaimed Larry, making a grab for the half-exposed catalog, as his aunt had thought he would. "A boarding school at Broxley!"

"Broxley!" chimed in Buck. "Why, that's where that lame man—Mr. Pomeroy, you know, Larry, the old pitcher—that's where he lives!"

"Sure enough!" Larry exclaimed. "Where'd this come from, Aunt Jennie?"

"Mrs. Margot left it," was the answer. Aunt Jennie kept on mending some of Henry P.'s socks.

"Mrs. Margot!" cried Buck. "What's she doing with a boarding school catalog?"

"She's going to send Fred there," said Mrs. Moxley, still mending socks with a great deal of calm.

"Fred! Fred Margot going to boarding school!" almost yelled Larry. "What's the idea? He never said anything to us about it, did he, Buck?"

"Never a word. How come, Aunt Jennie?"

"Oh, Fred's getting so big, his mother says, and he's so lively—so much energy you know—that it seems as if Tooksville were getting too small for him. Do you know," Aunt Jennie laid aside the sock as if the idea had suddenly occurred to her, "I sometimes think it would be good for you boys to go to boarding school."

"You do?" exclaimed Buck.

"You never said anything about it before," challenged Larry.

"I know; but the matter never exactly came up before," went on Mrs. Moxley, rather vaguely. "But since I've seen this catalog and heard that Fred is going and when I see what a fine place it is to play football——"

"Baseball, too!" cried Larry. "Look at that diamond, Buck! And the stands! Gee, what a field! Oh, boy! Are you going to send us there—to Broxley Academy—Aunt Jennie?" he asked eagerly.

"It would be wonderful!" chimed in Buck.
"Are you, Aunt Jennie?"

"Well, I don't know," she said slowly, again taking up the sock. "I'm afraid you boys wouldn't care for it. The course of study is probably pretty hard and——"

"Say, look here, Aunt Jennie," interrupted Larry, the stress of the occasion being enough apology, "if Fred Margot can go to Broxley so can we if you'll send us. Say, it'll be the best thing ever! Baseball! Oh, boy!"

"Can you beat it?" murmured Buck, leafing over the catalog.

"But I thought you liked your school here," said Aunt Jennie, determined to bring the matter to a head now that it was thus far along. "And what about the Resolute nine?"

For a moment Buck and Larry looked rather blank. Then Larry said:

"Well, it will be hard to give up the Resolutes. But if we can play on the Broxley nine it would be the berries."

"All to the mustard!" cried Buck. "As for the school here, I was getting sour on it, anyhow."

"So was I," declared his brother. "A few of the teachers are good, but old Henshaw that we had in Latin last term—phew! Fierce!"

"And Northcup in math!" added Buck. "He made me sick!"

"I hated to think of going back," went on

Larry. "And if you really have an idea we can go to Broxley with Fred, Aunt Jennie, and get on the nine and—and— Oh, boy! Are you in earnest, Aunt Jennie?"

"Don't get us all excited and then say we can't go!" pleaded Buck.

"Well," said Aunt Jennie, as she held the sock up to the light to see if there were any more holes in it, "I'll have to think about it and talk it over with your Uncle Henry. If he thinks well of it——"

"All he's thinking of now is that rocket invention," said Larry.

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed his aunt. "Well, we'll have to think about it and talk it over, boys. In some ways boarding school might be a good thing for you."

"The best, ever!" cried Buck.

"And may we look this catalog over some more?" asked Larry.

"Yes, take it up to your room, if you like," his aunt assented.

After the two boys had gone up to bed Mrs. Moxley smiled a little and murmured: "Well, that was easier than I thought. Mrs. Margot came just at the right time."

A few days later it was decided that Buck and Larry were to go to Broxley Academy, leaving Tooksville in time to start the fall term, which opened the latter part of September. Fred Margot was to go with them.

"Couldn't anything be better!" yelled Buck, leaping about and swinging his favorite bat when the decision was final.

"Do you think we can get on the nine at Broxley?" asked Fred, thumping his catching glove that had given valiant service in the season just closed.

"Why not?" asked Larry. "If not the first year, then the second. I'd be content to play on the scrub team for a while."

"So would I!" chimed in Buck and Fred.

"And if I can get Mr. Pomeroy to show me about that fadeaway," went on Larry, "I might become a better pitcher than I am. Oh, fellows, it's going to be great!"

"Marvelous!" agreed Buck.

The days passed. Letters were written by Mrs. Moxley and by Dean Werth Cartright of Broxley Academy, with the result that Buck and Larry Chester, as Fred Margot had already been, were officially invited by Dr. Albert North, head master of the school, to report for the opening of the fall term, September 24.

The boys packed their belongings in their valises, and only the fact that it was fall instead of spring kept Buck and Larry from taking a lot of baseballs, bats, and gloves.

"I'll send them to you if you get on the nine," their aunt promised. "There will be time enough."

"And when I get my rocket finished I'll

bring a sample down and shoot it off on the campus," offered Henry P.

"That sure will start something!" laughed Larry.

The day of departure came, and three happier lads never gathered at the Tooksville station to wait for the train that was to take them to Broxley. A crowd gathered on the platform to see the young students off.

"Gee! it's going to be tough for the Resolute to lose you three," wailed Billy Barry. "The nine will go to pieces!"

"No, it won't!" declared Larry. "There are enough other fellows."

"And we can still play during the summer vacation," added Buck.

"That's so! I didn't think of that!" Billy said. "Well, maybe it won't be so bad."

Aunt Jennie was there to bid her boys rather a tearful good-bye.

"Are you sure you have plenty of clean handkerchiefs?" she asked.

"Sure!" assented Buck, pulling a rather dirty one out of his pocket in confirmation.

"And be sure to change your socks when your feet are wet."

"Sure!" promised Larry.

Tom Baker came bustling through the throng.

"Here, Larry!" he called, holding out a white object. "It's just a souvenir baseball

we fellows want you to take with you as a memento."

Unsuspectingly, Larry Chester held out his hand for what seemed a new ball. But his fingers crushed the frail material of which the cover was made and he found himself clutching a mass of sticky marshmallow paste.

"Suffering tomcats!" he gasped, as he saw the mess. "I'll get you for that, Tom Baker!" he cried, amid the laughter of the crowd.

At the same time Buck was reaching out his hand to take a bunch of flowers Ned Powell offered him, though why he did it Buck did not know, as he had never suspected Ned of having much love for blossoms. But the excitement of leaving dulled his perceptions and he reached for the blooms only to get a face full of water from a rubber bulb concealed in the flowers. Ned squeezed the bulb to get the maximum effect.

"By golly!" spluttered Buck, as he mopped his face with his none-too-clean handkerchief, while his chums went into shrieks of mirth. "Wait until I get back, Ned Powell!"

"I'm a good waiter!" chuckled the joker.

There was more horseplay, mingled with some genuine leave-takings, and at last the train pulled in and the three boys got aboard.

"Good-bye!"

"Don't forget to write!"

"Hope you make the team!"

Thus called those left behind.

"Good-bye!" echoed Buck and Larry and Fred.

For a moment little twinges of regret mingled with their happiness, and then it was lost in the prospect before them.

Buck and Larry were off for Broxley Academy.

CHAPTER IX

A BAD START

BUCK and Larry Chester and Fred Margot found two unoccupied seats in the car, turned one of them so they could sit facing one another, Fred electing to ride backward, and the three settled themselves for the ride of several hours before they could reach Broxley. They noted two boys about their own age, whose valises were in the wire racks over their seat, across the aisle from them.

"Well, we're off!" remarked Buck, as the train gathered speed.

"Best thing that ever happened to us," declared Larry, as they passed through the outskirts of Tooksville.

"I always wanted to go to boarding school, but I sure hated to go alone," Fred said.

"Same here," Buck said. "Where's that catalog?" he asked, for the one which had started the new adventure had been pretty frequently consulted of late.

"Here," and Larry got it from his pocket. "I wonder," he said, "if they have really a good baseball nine at Broxley."

"Why wouldn't they? It's a big school, isn't it?" questioned Buck.

At the mention of Broxley, Buck and Larry and their chum noticed that the two boys across the aisle looked at them sharply and then at each other. One of the twain was a big, good-natured looking lad. The other, with a no less pleasant face, was smaller. He had very red hair. Then the big lad leaned over and said:

"Excuse us for butting in, but we heard you speak of Broxley. Are you fellows going there?"

"Yes," Larry replied. "It's our first term. Are you headed the same way?"

"Sure are!" exclaimed the red-haired lad. "Couldn't keep us away! Could they, Big Noise?" He laughed.

"You said it, Red!"

"Your first term?" asked Fred.

"No. Second."

"It's our first," Buck explained. "We don't know much about it—only just what we've read in the catalog. Is it a nice place?"

"The school is all right," replied the red-haired lad. "But some of the other things could be improved. How about it, Big Noise?" he appealed to his chum.

"Boy, you got that off your chest all right!" was the comment in a loud voice. "My name is Noyes," and he spelled it for the information of Buck and the other two. "Nat Noyes."

"Otherwise known as Big Noise—n-o-i-s-e or N-o-y-e-s, whichever way you spell it," added his seatmate. "I'm Dave Browning."

"But hardly ever called anything but Red," supplemented Big Noyes.

" 'S right!" assented the other. "Red to all my friends!"

Buck and Larry and Fred introduced themselves, and the five lads were soon as chummy as only boys can get on such short notice and under such circumstances.

"Have they got a good nine at Broxley?" asked Larry, when many questions and answers had shot to and fro.

"Oh, sort of," Red replied, not very enthusiastically.

"It might be better," agreed Big Noyes.

"What's wrong?" asked Buck, scenting something.

"He might better ask who's wrong, hadn't he, Red?" queried Big, as he was often called for short.

" 'S right!"

"What do you mean?" Larry wanted to know.

"Oh, well, there's no use making cracks," replied Big. "You'll find out soon enough when you get to Broxley. Why, do you fellows play ball?"

"Sort of," Buck admitted.

"And you ought to see Larry pitch!" cried Fred enthusiastically.

"Aw, cut it out!" Larry begged.

"Oh, so you pitch, do you?" asked Red.

"Well, I make a stab at it. I'd like to pitch on the academy team if I ever get the chance."

"Sorry, but I don't believe you will," remarked Big.

"Why not?"

"No use making any cracks there, either," was the reply. "You'll see before you've been there very long."

"I don't expect 'em to put anybody off the team to give me a place in the box," Larry said laughingly. "But maybe I could get on the scrub nine for the first season."

"Yes, I guess you could do that," assented Red Browning.

"What about the fellows who go there to school?" asked Buck. "Are they nice?"

"Some are," Big said.

"And some are punk!" burst out Red.

"Worse than that!" exclaimed his seat-mate.

"What's wrong?" Fred inquired.

"Oh, it isn't much," replied Big Noyes. "Say, don't let us give you the idea that Broxley is any worse than the general run of boarding schools. There's the usual bunch of good fellows and the usual bunch of rotten eggs.

But the good outnumber the bad, so everything comes out about even."

"How are the pros?" Larry asked.

"So-so," was Red's opinion.

"Some good, some bad, and some rotten!" commented the Big Noise. "You may like them and you may not. It all depends on your taste."

"We aren't fussy," said Buck with a laugh.

"The dean is pretty white," said Red. "That helps a lot."

"But look out for old Bunion!" warned Big. "Don't step on his corns."

"Is that his name—Bunion?" asked Fred, with a laugh.

"It's Amos Rumbun, but nobody ever calls him anything but Bunion—that is, when he doesn't hear us," explained Big. "He's fierce! He's one of the pros."

"Set me back a whole quarter in science," declared Red, "just because, when he asked me why I could see my breath on a frosty morning I said it was because I had had hot oatmeal for breakfast."

"By golly, I'll never forget that!" chuckled his chum.

"Me, either!" ruefully admitted Red. "I haven't heard the last of it from my dad yet, either. Bunion wrote home."

"Gee, that was fierce!" commented Fred.

"Rotten!" agreed Buck and Larry.

"Oh, well, I lived through it," said Red, with a bored air. "But I guess you fellows will like it at Broxley."

"I will if I can play ball," Larry declared. "We all want to get on the nine."

"That remains to be seen," remarked Red, and he and Big looked at each other significantly. But to all the questions of the new students they only replied:

"Wait until you get there."

The journey did not seem half as long as Buck and Larry and Fred had feared it would, thanks to the new friends they had met. So when, late in the afternoon, they left the train at Broxley and, with Nat Noyes, Dave Browning and some other new and returning students, piled into the school autobus at the station, they could hardly realize they had really arrived.

There was the usual babble of talk in the bus, the Chester boys and Fred Margot keeping rather silent and to themselves while Red Browning and Big Noyes renewed acquaintance with their classmates of the past year.

"There she blows, fellows!" Big suddenly shouted, much as if he were the harpooner in a whale boat. "There she blows!"

"Dear old Broxley!" some one murmured, with a sarcastic accent.

"Punk old school! I wish I didn't have to

come back!" said a glum-faced lad in the corner.

"Cheer up, Fathead, you'll like it after you get in the swing again!" said Red, with a laugh.

"I hope I get my old room back," Big remarked.

"Do they let you have a room the first year, or do you have to bunk in a dormitory?" asked Larry, who, with Buck and Fred, had been hoping that the three would be together.

"It all depends," Red explained. "Everything is sort of upset the first week or so, but if you stand in well with the dean you may get a room. I'll tell you how to apply."

"Wish you would," Larry said. "It isn't so much fun in a dorm."

"Don't fool yourself!" said the lad who had expressed a dislike of the place. "We have larks in our dorm; hey, Slim?" and he nudged a thin lad next to him.

"I should so say! Swell's no word for it! Well, this is my street. Stop the Rolls Royce, James!" he commanded in an exaggerated tone, as the bus swung up a long avenue of trees, at the end of which Buck and Larry had observed the group of buildings that represented Broxley Academy.

The boys piled out with laughter and shouts. The returning students called greetings to

friends scattered over the campus or strolling up and down the gravel walks. Obviously there were old and new students among these arrivals, and for a little while Buck and Larry and Fred felt rather like fish in strange waters.

"You fellows had better go right to the dean's office and report now," suggested Red Browning, imparting these friendly instructions. "Maybe you can get the room business settled now, but you may have to wait. See you later," and he waved to them.

"Sure! See you later!" echoed Big Noyes, and then he and Red Browning began talking with other friends.

Buck and Larry and Fred found a milling crowd in the dean's office, with several secretaries and assistants endeavoring to bring order out of the seeming chaos this first day of the term. But the three boys from Tooksville had their innings at last, and were registered, given a tentative study and recitation schedule, and assigned to a certain dormitory.

"Do you think," began Larry to the evidently harassed dean, "that we could—that is, maybe later—have a room—we three? We're from the same place and——"

"See me later about that, young man! See me later! No time to fix rooms now!" exclaimed Dean Cartright. "Everybody wants a room. If we had a hundred rooms there

wouldn't be enough. See me later. I'll do the best I can. Now then, next boy——"

He gently urged Buck and Larry and Fred onward and outward. A secretary scanned their registry cards on the way and told them where to go to find the dormitory and leave their belongings.

"Well, it might be worse," Larry said, as they found the place where they were to sleep and saw that it was a room containing ten beds. "Only seven others in with us."

"If they're the right sort we can stand it," commented Buck.

"But it would be a lot more fun to have a room with just us three in it," was Fred's opinion, in which the others joined.

They found an upper classman as a sort of prefect in charge of their dormitory, and he told them to pick their beds and put their valises under them, as they were the first arrivals, and to put their toilet articles on the small dressing tables which adjoined the respective beds.

"Take three beds in the corner," advised Fred, as Buck and Larry appeared to hesitate.

"Why?" Larry asked.

"There's always a pillow fight the first night," Fred explained. "I know a fellow who once went here and he told me. If you're in a corner you get shot at from only one side.

If you're in the middle you get it both ways."

"The corner it is, then!" decided Buck, and so it was.

Having laid out their possessions, they took the advice of the prefect and went out on the campus. As Larry, in the lead, emerged from the dormitory building, he collided rather sharply with a big, hulking lad who was just entering.

"Hey, why don't you look where you're going?" demanded the big lad.

"Or else go where you're looking!" chimed in another, one of two who were with the hulking chap.

"What's the matter, is he pie-eyed?" demanded the third member of the trio.

"Seems so," said the first. "What's the big idea, anyhow, you big stiff?" His voice was snarlingly angry.

"I beg your pardon," Larry said mildly.

"Well, you'd better!"

"Why had he?" demanded Buck, stepping forward. "Who'd make him if he didn't want to?" His voice was challenging.

"I would!" was the quick rejoinder.

"Oh, you would?" cried Buck. "Well, we don't ask any odds of you, and if you're looking for a fight I haven't had one to-day and I usually take one on just before supper!" Buck squared off.

"Soak him, Clem!" cried one of the hulking lad's cronies.

"Show him which side he'd rather be laid out on!" chimed in the other.

"Well, of all the nerve!" gasped Clem himself, as he looked first at Larry and then at Buck. "Of all the nervy freshies! By golly, I've a good notion——"

He drew back his fist. Buck was on the point of launching a blow, but Larry caught him by the arm and said beseechingly:

"Cut it out! For cat's sake, cut it out! We don't want a fight the first day we're here!"

"I'll smash him!" cried Clem.

"Let me go, Larry!" demanded Buck.

"No, I will not!"

"Go on in and smash him, Clem," cried his two cronies.

There would undoubtedly have been an encounter but suddenly the cry was raised:

"Cheese it, fellows! Here comes Bunion!"

Even the hulking Clem was not proof against this, and he and his two followers shrank away, the bully muttering:

"I'll see you two freshies again, and you won't get off so easily!"

"Any time you like," retorted Buck.

The group of boys that had gathered in eager anticipation of a fight dispersed rather reluctantly. Among the loiterers Buck and Larry saw Big Noyes and Red Browning.

"You wanted to know why you probably wouldn't get on the ball nine, didn't you?" asked Red slowly.

"Yes," answered Larry.

"There goes one of the reasons," Red went on, pointing to the retreating bully.

"Who is he?"

"Clem Carey. He thinks he's the boss of the school. He's the pitcher, and if you think you can horn him out you've got another thought coming," explained Big Noyes.

"Oh, well, I don't want to displace him," Larry said.

"Not a chance!" chuckled Red. "And his two friends are about as bad for the strangle hold they have on the team."

"Who are they?" asked Buck.

"That squint-eyed lad is Lon Snoper. He plays center, and the big stiff who wears the light hair is Taffy Stutz. He catches what Clem pitches and the three of them just about run the nine. That's what I didn't tell you in the train," went on Red. "I wanted you to find out for yourselves."

"Well, I guess we've found out," said Larry, with a little laugh. "I really didn't mean to bump into him."

"He'll never believe you didn't," declared Big. "I'm afraid, my lads," he said with an assumption of fatherly dignity, "that you've

got off to a bad start. But cheer up! Red and I will stick by you!"

"Sure!" assented Red. "I've got no use for Clem Carey and his bunch. Big lot of stiff!"

Buck and Larry and Fred looked at one another. Their advent into Broxley was not as auspicious as they could have wished. But they were young and trouble sat lightly on them.

"Don't lose any sleep over it," advised Red, seeing that the newcomers were taking what had happened rather seriously. "There won't be any baseball until spring, and that's a long way off. A lot can happen by that time."

"Clem and his bodyguard may get fired," suggested Big Noyes, with a hearty laugh.

Then, as Buck and Larry and Fred were wondering what to do next, a shrill cry arose from a distant field and a big crowd was seen collecting.

"Come on if you want to see it!" advised Red, and he set off on a run, followed wonderingly by the three boys from Tooksville.

CHAPTER X

TWO GIRLS

“WHAT is it?” panted Buck Chester as he raced beside Big Noyes.

“A fight?” questioned Larry.

“Sort of,” answered Red Browning, with a chuckle. “It’s the first football practice, the regular school team against the omelets—you know, the poor scrubs. It’ll be fun to watch.”

Then the newcomers noticed that they were headed toward the football field, the goal posts of which they could see through the trees.

“You see,” explained Red to his new friends, “the football squad and enough of the scrubs to make opposition always report for practice ahead of the academy opening. That’s why they’re here now. You’ll see some snappy work.”

“Sure! We have a good eleven!” added Big Noyes.

There was a lively scene being enacted on the gridiron when Buck and Larry and Fred reached it.

There was nothing like a regular game at first, for the coach of the eleven made them go

through formation after formation against as stiff opposition as he could organize among the scrubs. Time after time some boy was called out and told how to play his position properly. But at last the regulars were given the ball and told to do their best to rush it down the field against the holding scrubs.

Then, indeed, the semblance to a real game was under way and Buck and Larry and Fred enjoyed it greatly, though, truth to tell, they were more inclined to baseball than football.

"We're going to have a dandy eleven this season," confided Red when the practice game was over with the regulars making the required touchdown against stiff opposition.

"And a hard schedule, too," added Big. "Tapper has a much heavier team, I hear, and Elmwood Tech and Lakeside are after our scalps."

"Are these other schools?" asked Larry.

"Sure," answered Red. "Tapper's a military school—a stuck-up bunch of snobs, if you ask me—but they have a good football team."

"How about baseball?" asked Buck.

"Not so hot," was the answer of Big Noyes. "We generally manage to beat 'em on the diamond."

"But we've never yet taken a baseball game from Elmwood or Lakeside," declared Red.

"Is that so?" asked Fred, in surprise. "You mean you've never licked 'em at baseball?"

"That's right."

"Why?" Larry wanted to know.

"Ask that big stiff, Clem Carey," came from Big. "How about it, Red?"

"'S right. He gums the works every time."

"Maybe we could get up a nine that would beat those two schools," suggested Larry. "I don't mean us personally," he added, as he saw Red and Big look at him questioningly. "But Broxley Academy."

"It's been tried, but never done," Red went on. "There seems to be something permanently wrong with our nine."

"It's suffering from Clemitis," chuckled Big. "But, say, you fellows must have been big shots in your home town when it comes to baseball. How about it?"

"We had a good nine," said Larry, modestly enough. "But we were only part of it. I wish we could get on the nine here."

"You have a stiff hill to climb there," affirmed Red. "But we'll help you if we can."

"Don't you two play yourselves?" asked Buck.

"Oh, sure, we're on the nine," answered Big. "I play second and Red holds down first. But Clem runs the team—he and Taffy and Lon. What they say goes. But come on, we must hurry back if we want to eat. There's always a big push the first night."

"Hope they have enough to go around," Fred murmured.

"Oh, there's enough—if you can get it," replied Red, with a laugh.

The Tooksville boys were more and more delighted with Broxley Academy every moment of their stay, in spite of an undercurrent of uneasiness regarding baseball and the fact that they had so early crossed the path of Clem Carey and his cronies.

Under the guidance of their new friends they found their way to the dining hall where, indeed, there was plenty to eat and lots of jolly fun, horseplay, laughter, shouting and excitement, always attendant upon the opening day of school. The prefects did what they could to preserve order but it was hard work. However, Buck and Larry and Fred were used to fending for themselves and they managed to get enough to eat.

Then came an evening with nothing to do save stroll about, learn the location of certain traditional spots connected with the history of Broxley, which was a very old school, and make new acquaintances, which they did under the tutelage of Red Browning and Big Noyes.

Once the three from Tooksville passed Clem Carey and a bunch of his friends. The bully scowled in their direction and remarked loudly enough for them to hear:

"There go the fresh freshies now! I'm not

through with them! If they think they can come here from a little tank town and run things they'll find it haywire, and I'm telling you now!"

"Don't answer him, Buck!" warned Larry, as he saw his brother's fists clenching. "Don't queer things at the start!"

"I'd like to queer him—the big stiff!" Buck muttered. "And I will, too, if he keeps on."

"Better let him run his own airship," advised Red. "He's a bad actor, that Clem."

"We'll see," was all Buck answered.

As predicted, there was the usual boisterous play and pillow fights in the dormitory a little later. The strategy of the Tooksville lads in choosing a corner was justified, for they had a vantage point from which to give battle. The fun grew so furious at last that one of the professors, summoned by a frantic prefect, came in and effectually quelled it.

But even then it was some time before the boys settled down to sleep.

"It was the berries!" said Fred Margot, the next morning. "How about it?"

"I wouldn't have missed it even for a ball game," returned Larry, and this was saying a great deal.

"It was a lucky shot—us coming here!" was Buck's opinion.

The object of school is study; so Buck and Larry and Fred and others went to classes day

by day, recited, received their assignments for the next day, and departed to study the lessons set for them.

As a matter of fact, as soon as each and every lad was dismissed from the last class of the day, instead of going to his room or dormitory to study, he went to the football field, either to watch practice or see a game, for the football season was soon in full swing.

Two weeks passed, with the Tooksville boys gradually fitting into their new environment. They were delighted when they received an assignment to a room with three beds, and out of the freshman dormitories.

"Now we'll begin to live!" exclaimed Larry, as they moved in their possessions.

"And Red and Big have a room right across the hall from ours," reported Fred.

"Hot towel!" cried Buck. "That's great! Great!"

Finally it was the day of the annual football game between Lakeside and Broxley, following the first contest of the season between Broxley and Tapper Military Academy, which Broxley had won.

"These aren't such bad seats," remarked Larry, as, with his brother, Fred, Red, and Big, he made his way into the stand for the Lakeside-Broxley football fight. It was one of the major contest of the season when tickets were at a premium.

"Sure!" assented Buck.

"Right about the middle of the field," added Fred.

As the five boys went down the sloping aisle to their row, they saw, adjoining their places, Clem Carey and his two cronies talking to two pretty girls.

"Like to meet 'em?" asked Red of the Tooksville boys, when he saw their admiring glances sweep over the party in question.

"You mean Clem?" asked Larry, smiling.

"I do not! I mean Nell Mason and Flora Maywood. They're peaches of girls. Go to some swell school around here. Oodles of money, got a car and a chauffeur, no end of lugs, but nice for all that. Like to meet 'em?"

"Sure!" assented Buck. "Why not?"

"Clem and his crowd are the only reasons why not," answered Big. "The girls always like to meet new fellows. Watch your hearts, new boys. But you'll like 'em. Come on, I'll do the honors."

"And watch Clem's face," advised Red, in a low voice.

The Tooksville boys and their new friends pushed they way to their seats past the bully's little party and when they were settled Big introduced Nell Mason and Flora Maywood to the Tooksville lads. There were the usual exchanges of: "pleased to meet you," and then Larry, determining on a bold course, managed

to get a place next to Nell, by means of asking Red to change. Then, addressing the pretty Flora Maywood, he asked her:

“Are you, by any chance, a relative of General Maywood of Tooksville?”

“Why, really, I don’t know, Mr. Chester,” she answered, turning a pair of devastating eyes on him. “I didn’t know we had a general in the family.”

“Oh, you must have a general at least,” he said, with a laugh. “He has a wonderful place just outside our town, and if you ever come out there——”

“I guess I’d better wait to be invited,” she broke in, with a merry laugh. “I must ask mother if we have any relations out that way. Fancy having a general in the family, Nell!”

“Lucky girl!” challenged her companion.

“There are some Masons out Tooksville way, also,” put in Buck, leaning over to address the other girl.

“Yes, I dare say, and carpenters and bricklayers, too,” she said, with a mischievous smile.

“No, I’m not joking, really!” declared Buck.

“Really?” she questioned, pointing a gloved hand at him.

“Honor bright! The Masons are one of the most influential families——”

"Oh, what jolliers your friends are, Mr. Noyes!" broke in Flora.

"I'll say they're fast workers, anyhow!" chuckled Red.

Meanwhile Clem Carey, who, up to this time, had had the girls to himself, for Taffy and Lon hardly counted, did not know what to make of this. He was not used to being cut under in this way. He glared at the Tooksville boys, and then, passing his program toward Flora, said in a loud voice:

"Maybe you'd like to look over the list of players so you'll know them before the game starts."

"Oh, thank you, no," she answered, hardly turning her head. "I want to hear more about my famous general relative. Go on, Mr. Chester! Please!"

CHAPTER XI

THE FIGHT

COULD looks have utterly removed, or at least silenced Buck and Larry and their crowd from further participation in the jolly bantering of the two pretty girls, those glances which Clem Carey shot in the direction of the Tooksville lads and their sophomore friends would surely have done it. For Clem did nothing less than glare, especially after Flora Maywood refused his offer of the program.

Larry Chester, quick to realize his advantage, pressed it to the utmost, with the result that before the starting whistle blew he and his companions were well enthroned in the graces of the two pretty girls.

The game was a hard and fast one from the initial kick-off to the final touchdown. Broxley had her work cut out from the beginning.

The first quarter ended with no score for either side, though once the goal line of Broxley was in imminent danger. Then the loyal supporters of that school rose in their might in the stands and, led by the cheer-directors, shouted:

"Hold 'em, Broxley! Hold 'em, Broxley! Hold 'em, Broxley!"

Buck and Larry and Fred added their voices to this imploring chorus and so did Nell Mason and her companion, their cries mingling with the lower notes of their boy friends.

Broxley held, with the result that she went into the second quarter with more confidence, for this was one of the few times she had been able to get the edge on Lakeside.

Then came a gloriously brilliant play in the second quarter, where a Broxley back, snatching a forward pass out of the air and almost from the hands of the Lakeside end, for whom it was destined, raced three quarters of the length of the field for a touchdown. Then, indeed, the Broxley stands went wild. Hats were smashed, chrysanthemums torn to tatters, and in her excitement, Flora Maywood found herself frantically beating Larry on the back, whereat, blushing, she excused herself.

"Go on! I like it!" said Larry.

"Oh, you do not!"

"Sure I do," he declared.

But if Broxley thought to count this run as victory she was mistaken, for, roused by this score against them, Lakeside came back in bulldog fighting spirit and got a touchdown for themselves, though they failed to kick goal, which gave Broxley a margin of one slim point. But a point wins many a game.

Between halves there was singing, band music, and much gossip in the stands, and in this latter sport Buck and Larry and Fred managed to more than hold their own with Clem Carey and his cronies as far as the two pretty girls were concerned.

In the third quarter, following the frantic appeals of their coach while in the dressing rooms, Broxley cut loose and, rushing the ball down, got another touchdown, though two of her best men were laid out and had to leave the field in consequence. Once more the wild tumult, only as the third quarter opened, to have a gloom fall like a pall over the Broxley stands, for the visitors again crossed the goal line, but failed in the kick, as Broxley had also done on her second touchdown, so that the score was now 13 to 12 in favor of Broxley.

"If we can only hold 'em!" muttered Red, as the ball was brought out for play again following Lakeside's second touchdown. "If we can only hold 'em!"

"Hold 'em! Hold 'em!" was the cry.

"Don't let 'em score!"

Lakeside was playing desperately to overcome the narrow margin between defeat and victory, and almost accomplished it, for they had the heavier line. But Broxley, tasting the sweets of a seldom-seen victory, clung like grim death to the ground and when the final whistle blew they had won by a single point.

Not "as wide as a barn door nor as deep as a well," but enough to bring about a great celebration.

"Well, it was a wonderful game!" said Flora Maywood, as she turned her devastating eyes in Larry's direction. "It was glorious! I enjoyed it so much!"

"So did I!" said Larry, in a low, meaning voice.

"Let me in on that," begged Buck. "How about you, Miss Mason?" for between halves there had been a shifting of seats, and Buck and Larry managed to interspace themselves between the girls, much to the good-natured amusement of Red and Big and to the unrestrained, glaring looks of the very jealous Clem Carey.

"Oh, I had a wonderful time!" asserted Nell Mason.

The girls rose to leave, for the stands were emptying, most of the students, indeed, rushing down to join in a wild Broxley dance around the goal posts, where Red and Big felt it their place to be. But Clem Carey and Taffy Stutz clung to their seats and the former started to say something to Flora Maywood, only Larry got ahead of him with:

"May we take you to your car?"

"Oh, I think we can find it," she answered, with a smile which said as plainly as anything: "Please come!"

"Hawkins knows where we told him to park," said Nell Mason.

"We'll trail along, if you don't mind," said Buck, for Fred had rushed down on the grid-iron to join in the dance with Red and Big and the others.

"Thanks, awfully!" said Nell Mason.

So Buck and Larry had a pleasure of which they little dreamed that morning, and more than one young masculine glance went in their direction as they escorted what Buck later designated as, "two of the prettiest girls in the world!" It was not too much praise either.

As though they had been accustomed all their lives to handing young ladies into a Rolls Royce, Buck and Larry did the honors gracefully, and even had the inspiration to arrange for another meeting—to call, in fact, at Taunton Court, the school which the girls attended.

It was when Buck and Larry got back to the football field and were looking for Fred that Clem and Taffy stepped out of a crowd of boys. There was a scowl on Clem's face which his crony, Taffy Stutz, when he saw it, endeavored to copy. Buck growled:

"What's the idea—you fellows?"

"What idea?" asked Larry, all too innocently.

"What's eating you?" demanded Buck, who always liked to get quick action.

"I'll be eating you if you don't keep away from those girls!" sneered Clem.

"Our girls!" supplemented Taffy.

"Oh, is that so?" asked Larry, coolly cutting in. "I thought this was a free country and that young ladies could choose whom they pleased to walk with."

"Lay off that stuff!" warned Clem, striding forward while a ring of eager, expectant lads formed about the quartette. "If I catch you making up to those girls again——"

"You won't have to try very hard to catch us!" cried Buck. "You mind your own business and we'll mind ours!"

"Oh, is that so?" growled Clem. "Well, here's something for you to mind!"

He took a quick step forward and shot a fist at Buck. But the latter was on the watch, dodged the fist skillfully, and clipped a neat left to Clem's chin which not only surprised but effectually staggered that young bully.

At the same time Taffy Stutz made a hostile pass at Larry, who shifted and brought a hearty right to bear full on the nose of Taffy with the result that the blood began to well forth.

"A fight! A fight!" gleefully yelled the increasing crowd. "Oh, a fight!"

And there was a real fight then and there, with Clem and Taffy hitting out so wildly that Buck and Larry had little trouble in getting

the best of them in good fashion. Blows flew thick and fast, and in the midst of the most exciting part, when the Chester brothers were forcing back their opponents, a shrill cry arose:

“Here comes Bunion! Cheese it!”

CHAPTER XII

SPRING IS HERE

“WHAT does this mean?”

The voice of Professor Rumbun shot this at the fighters and the spectators, as the ring opened to let him through and the active hostilities ceased at his advent.

“What does this mean?” he repeated.

He need not have asked. The veriest tyro could have told it was a fight and a good one.

“Fighting?” went on Professor Rumbun, as if the idea had just occurred to him. “Disgraceful! Who started it?”

This gave Clem the opening he needed.

“He hit me first!” he said, indicating Buck.

“And he pasted me on the nose!” almost blubbered Taffy. He need not have spoken. His nose did that for him.

“You big stiffs!” cried Buck. “I didn’t hit you until you made a pass at me!”

“And that goes for you!” cried Larry to Taffy.

“So you struck the first blows, did you?” asked Professor Rumbun sternly.

"Well, we did," admitted Buck. But they——"

"That's enough. Go to your room, Chester! You, too!" and he glared at Larry. "I'll take this up later. As for you, Carey and Stutz——"

Buck was not going to be put off this way.

"See here, Professor Rumbun!" he cried. "They began this scrap and my brother and I only——"

"Silence! I don't want to hear another word! To your rooms!"

"But let me——" persisted Buck until Larry pulled him by the sleeve and whispered:

"Cut it out! You'll only make it worse. This isn't the first fight they've had at Broxley. They can't any more than campus us for a week or so, and it was worth it, that sock I got at Taffy's nose."

"Well, if you put it that way," said Buck, grinning as he looked at Clem trying to reduce the black swelling of his left eye, "I guess I'm satisfied. Come on!"

He and Larry started for their room under the stern glance of the professor, while Clem and his cronies moved off with some of their friends. Fred Margot, coming back from the football celebration, loudly bewailed having missed the fight, especially when he heard the other boys admiringly remarking:

"Gee, it was a peach of a row!"

"Did you see Buck Chester paste Clem?"

"Yeh! And did you see his brother sock Taffy on the smeller? Oh, boy! Blood! No end of it! Great!"

"Some scrappers, these new lads!"

"Pippins!"

"Yeh! Hear they're good ball players, too."

"Well, Clem got only what he was looking for, didn't he?"

"So did Taffy. Gee, you ought to have seen the blood run! Great!"

"Blame my luck!" muttered Fred, as he hastened after his chums. "Missing the best part of the show!"

The after consequences, as regards the official punishment meted out to Buck and Larry, were not severe. They were summoned, with Clem and Taffy, before the dean who, being a wise and experienced man, did not inquire too closely into the whys and wherefores. He smiled in his dry and not ungenial manner and delivered his ultimatum:

"The four of you campused for three days."

It was very mild punishment, as Buck and Larry admitted, though Clem and Taffy grumbled loudly and made remarks about its being the fault of the new boys. But Larry acted as a governor to his brother's engine, and succeeded in avoiding another clash.

Life at Broxley Academy settled down into the fall and winter routine. There were more

football games, including a disastrous defeat of Broxley at the hands of Elmwood Tech. Then cold weather clamped itself down, the gridiron was covered with snow, and winter sports had their day.

There was skating and hockey and tobogganing, and Buck and Larry and Fred declared more than once that they never could have come to a better school. They said as much in letters home. Aunt Jennie wrote in return, but Henry P. was too busy over his skyrocket to do so.

There was little news in Tooksville, Mrs. Moxley reported. It was lonesome without "her boys," and she did hear talk that the Resolutes were going on with the league games in the spring and hoped that Buck and Larry could play in some contests.

"And, by golly, it won't be long until spring, and we'll have some baseball here!" cried Buck.

"If—" suggested Larry significantly.

"If what?"

"If we can get on the team."

"Well, why for cats' sake, can't we?"

"Clem's the answer."

"That big stiff! Yes, I know we're on the outs with him, but, by golly, I'd rather have it that way and never pick up a bat again than play on a team under him!"

"Same here!" Larry echoed. "Well, we'll

see what happens. Going over to Taunton?"

"Sure am!"

So they met the girls again.

Thus passed most of the winter. Besides sports, there were of course studies, recitations, and examinations, in which Buck and Larry and Fred did as well as the average.

Taunton Court was located in the town of Taunton, about ten miles from Broxley, and busses ran frequently to and fro. The boys from the academy provided a goodly revenue to the bus concern, for there were many pretty girls, besides Nell Mason and Flora Maywood, at Taunton Court, and it did not take the Broxley lads long to discover this nor to take advantage of it.

Buck and Larry were not slow to press their acquaintance with Flora and Nell, and many an evening when they might, to the better of their scholastic records, have been studying Latin or mathematics, they were to be found either in the movies, the dance hall, or the bright "soda shoppe" of Taunton. With the girls, of course.

One evening there was another clash between Clem and his crony and the Chester brothers. It occurred when Buck and Larry were going over to keep an engagement with the two girls, having arranged to meet them at the drug store corner and go to the movies.



LARRY SHOVED TAFFY AND THE TWO BULLIES COLLIDED.
Larry's Fadeaway.

Clem and Taffy had also gone to Taunton, and, strolling around the corner of the "soda shoppe," had encountered Nell and Flora. Stung by the knowledge that he and Taffy had been rather effectually cut out, Clem and his crony began to take revenge by sneering remarks as they saw Flora and her companion coming down the street.

"Here are the girls that like small-town kids," remarked Clem, who boasted of the fact that he came from a large city.

"Yeh," chimed in Taffy. "Kids from the sticks," and he and Clem lurched across the sidewalk in time to block the way for the two girls.

"Stand aside, please!" demanded Flora, her color heightening.

"Oh, isn't there room for you?" sneered Clem.

"Yes, there is now!" cried Buck, as he and Larry at that moment reached the corner. Buck pushed Clem aside so vigorously that the bully all but fell. Meanwhile, Larry shoved Taffy, with the result that the two bullies collided and banged up against the "soda shoppe."

"Hey, what's the big idea?" cried Clem.

"You know!" said Larry significantly. "Fade away!"

"Or if you'd like to meet us later," said Buck, with exaggerated politeness, "we'll be

here in about two hours—after the movies.”

“Aw, you big stiffs!” was all Taffy could think of to say.

“I’ll see you later all right!” exclaimed Clem.

The two cronies slunk away and Buck and Larry, joining the girls, had a pleasant evening. The brothers made a point of going back to the corner on their way to Broxley, but saw nothing of Clem or his companion.

“They may lay for us at Broxley,” suggested Larry.

“Let ’em lay, though they’re no chickens!” chuckled Buck.

But Clem and Taffy evidently had no desire to continue fistic hostilities, for they did not seek to renew the quarrel.

More winter days followed—snow, ice, freezes, and thaws. Then, one morning, after a gentle wind from the south had been blowing for some time, clearing away the piles of snow, Larry Chester leaped out of bed, stuck his head from the window, breathed deep, and cried:

“Buck, she’s here!”

“Who, for cats’ sake?”

“Spring has come! I can smell it. Oh, spring! Glorious spring! Of thee I sing. Of thee I——”

Larry broke off suddenly, for Fred’s slipper

took him in the back of the head. But, undaunted, the young pitcher went on:

“Spring is here!”

Buck, going to the other window, took a deep inhalation and murmured:

“It sure is!”

Then, going to a closet in the room, he took out his favorite bat that Aunt Jennie had sent and cried:

“Play ball!”

CHAPTER XIII

LEFT OUT

"GEE, fellows, it doesn't seem possible that we're going to get out on the diamond again!"

"And sock the old horsehide!"

Fred Margot had thus echoed Buck Chester's enthusiastic exclamation, and Larry had followed. The latter, as he spoke, had gone to his dresser and taken out an old practice ball which he tossed to Fred across the room, while Buck pretended to be a batter at the plate.

"It won't be long now," went on Larry. "The ground will soon be in shape and then we'll start. Hope this school plays some good nines."

"I hear it does all right," commented Fred. "Too good, as a matter of fact. Broxley gets dumped most of the time."

"Maybe there'll be better luck this year," said Buck as, still in his pajamas, he continued to swing his bat.

"Meaning when we get on the team?" asked Larry.

"Sure!"

"It isn't going to be easy," said Fred.

"What? To make the Broxley nine win a few games?" asked Larry.

"No," replied the former catcher of the Resolutes slowly. "I mean it isn't going to be easy for us three to make the nine after the sour time we've had with Clem Carey and his bunch all winter."

"Oh, he's a bunch of haywire!" cried Buck. "He can't run the whole school!"

"No. But he can run the nine, and he comes pretty near doing it, from what I hear," commented Fred. "But then there are lots of things that can happen between now and the opening game. Gee, it's colder than I thought," and he had started to get back into bed when the door opened and the Big Noise stuck his head in. He, too, was pajama-clad and a grin spread over his large, good-natured face as he cried:

"Well, for yelling at the umpire! What's this?"

"Just a little early practice," laughed Larry.

"Say, don't you fellows ever sleep?" demanded Red, following his chum into the room of the Tooksville lads. "What's the idea getting up in the middle of the night and waking everybody else up?"

"Go on, you sleepyhead!" cried Buck. "It's morning!"

"Why, so it is!" murmured Big Noyes with an exaggerated yawn and stretch. "Came

morn and the golden sun bathed in rosy warmth the two lovers in their sylvan retreat. How's that for a movie title?" he asked.

"You'd better make a talkie out of it," his roommate advised. "But say, fellows, what's the big idea?" he asked the others.

"Spring has come," recited Larry. "Can't you smell it?"

"And practice will soon start," added Buck.

"Say, give us the low-down on the baseball situation here at Broxley, will you, Red?" asked Larry. "What's Clem Carey really got to do with it?"

"Everything," was the answer. "At least, he's run the nine as long as Big and I have been here, which of course hasn't been forever. But this is how it shapes up.

"We have three big games every year. It isn't anything like a championship league, but we always play Tapper Military Academy, Elmwood Tech. and Lakeside. As far as I've heard, we generally beat the wooden soldiers. But we've never yet beaten Elmwood or Lakeside."

"Do you mean Broxley *never* has taken a game from them?" asked Buck.

"That's what I mean! Never!"

"Well, it's about time we did," declared Fred.

"Try to do it!" echoed Big Noyes. "I guess

there are more fellows than you who'd like to see that happen. But it never has."

"Maybe it will," ventured Buck hopefully. "Anyhow, it'll be great to get the old spiked shoes on again and run around the bases."

"You fellows have played quite a lot of ball, haven't you?" asked Red, as he wandered about the room with the usual freedom of a good chum.

"Oh, so-so," Larry answered, as he pretended to wind up for a fast delivery.

"Hello, what's this?" went on Red, as, picking up one of Buck's neckties to admire, he displaced a bunch of newspapers on the bureau. Among them were some numbers of the *Tooksville Times* which contained accounts of the forming of the Canico River League, stories of the part Buck and Larry and Fred had played in this, and some reports of the big games. The pictures of the boys were also displayed.

"Say, you fellows must be big shots in your own town!" commented Red.

"Oh, can it!" begged Larry. "What'd you want to let that stuff lie around for, Buck?"

"I didn't. You must have put it there last night when you were dressing to go to the movies."

"Don't be too modest!" advised Big Noyes. "But is all this stuff true?" he asked, looking over a bunch of clippings.

"Oh, we helped form a league and we managed to win the pennant," Larry answered. "That's about all there is to it."

"Well, that seemed to be plenty, according to the papers," observed Red. "Golly!" he cried, as the rising gong sounded. "There goes the bell, and I've got to do some boning or take a cut, and I can't afford any more if I want to make the nine."

"You play on it this year then?" asked Larry, as the visitors prepared to go to their own room.

"We think we do," came from Big. "So long, see you later!" and he scooted down the hall after his auburn-haired roommate.

"I guess we'd better get dressed instead of kidding ourselves that we're going to be ball players," remarked Larry, with a shade of sarcasm in his voice as he put away the ball.

"I'm going to make a stab at getting on, or I'll know why!" declared Buck. "I'm not going to sit back and take Clem's dirty dust!"

"Neither am I!" added Fred.

The promise of the coming of spring, hailed by the Tooksville boys, was borne out more amply a few days later, and within the week small groups of lads could be seen on the diamond and on grounds adjacent to it, tossing and batting balls in early practice. Among them, naturally, were the three from Tooksville. They had their own paraphernalia, sent

on from home, and with Red, Big, and a few congenial comrades, they played more than one practice game, sometimes with a full nine, sometimes with half the complement and with shortened rules.

If Buck and Larry and Fred expected to see Clem assert his prerogative as manager of the school nine by ordering them and other players about in those early spring days, they were agreeably disappointed. The bully and his particular chums did nothing more than indulge in practice with the others. Nor was Clem unduly bossy. Also, in some measure, he seemed to have smothered his former anger against the three lads from Tooksville and though he could not be called friendly, still he was not openly hostile.

But as a hidden mine, well prepared by the sappers, explodes without a moment's warning, so did what might be called a baseball bombshell burst over the heads of Buck and Larry and Fred about a week after the little scene in their room.

It was at the close of classes. With many others, the three chums hastened from "the slave den," as Buck called the recitation room, and gathered about the bulletin board to which athletic and sport notices were always affixed.

There was a sheet of paper, prominently displayed, containing a proclamation to the effect that baseball practice would start formally the

coming Saturday on the diamond. The notice was signed by Clem Carey, as manager, and Taffy Stutz, as captain of the Broxley Academy nine.

"The following players will report," the notice went on, and then followed a list of names, including those of Big Noyes and Red Browning, and of course, Lon Snoper.

The names of Buck and Larry and Fred did not appear. They read the list twice to make sure, and then Larry, turning away with a laugh he tried to make sound indifferent, said:

"Well, we seem to have been left out."

"Looks so!" muttered Buck.

"What's the idea, I wonder?" came from Fred.

"The idea is," said a sneering voice behind them, speaking loudly, "that you fellows aren't going to play ball here, and the sooner you get that into your noddles the better!"

Buck and Larry and Fred and their friends, Red Browning and Big Noyes, turned to see Clem Carey sneering at them. There was a tantalizing smile on his face.

"Did you get that?" he asked. "You don't play ball! Is my meaning clear?"

"As mud!" said Larry, turning on his heel and striding away, followed by Buck and Fred.

CHAPTER XIV.

A BIG ROW

PRACTICE for the opening of the baseball season at Broxley Academy started at the time set. All of the boys whose names were down on the official call responded, and a lively game was soon under way, with the scrubs on one side and on the other the more or less official school nine, made up of the regulars and some who had been selected by Clem to take the places of those who had graduated the previous June. Numbered among the regulars were Big Noyes, Red Browning, Taffy Stutz, Lon Snoper and, of course, Clem Carey, who occupied the pitching box.

"Now, fellows," began Clem as the game started, "we want to do our best and make up a good nine and win all the games we can this season."

"Sure!" came rather mockingly from Red.

"Shut up!" ordered Clem. "I'm doing the talking!"

"Well, then let somebody else do the playing so we'll win more games than we did last year!" cried Big Noyes in his loud voice.

"What do you mean—'more games than last year?'" demanded Clem, who was plainly nettled.

"I mean let's beat Elmwood and Lakeside. Why can't we beat them?"

"Oh, shut up!" was Clem's advice. "Let's get to practicing."

The impromptu game got under way. While playing was a bit ragged and full of errors at first, the boys gradually recovered their baseball sense and in the end the regulars beat the scrubs by a good margin, which made Clem bubble over.

"Who says we haven't got the makings of a good nine?" he demanded of everybody in general.

"Well, we ought to beat that bunch of scrubs," declared Red.

"Say, look here!" cried Clem, striding up to him angrily. "What do you mean by all these cracks and saying we ought to beat Elmwood and Lakeside? What do you mean?"

"Just what I said!" retorted Red.

"Well, you say too blamed much!" sneered Clem. "And if you don't keep your mouth closed I'll give you something to put in it!"

"You will? What?"

"This!" Clem's fist shot out.

If he had had any intention of hitting Red, it was frustrated by Big Noyes, who reached

over, caught Clem's arm, and swung him about sharply, with the remark:

"Naughty! Naughty! Mamma spank!"

"Say, you big stiff, what do you mean?" Clem blurted out.

"Oh, mamma's little boy is getting angry! Naughty! Naughty!" cried Big with such a comical attitude of anxiety that the others set up a howl of laughter, even Taffy and Lon joining in.

As Clem could not take offense unless he wanted to get in the bad graces of the whole bunch, he made a virtue of necessity by scowling at them, half smiling, and saying:

"Too many nasty cracks about our nine have been made lately. We have a good nine. It isn't my fault if we can't beat Elmwood and Lakeside. Not my fault at all!"

"Sure it is!" declared Red.

"How do you make that out?"

"Well, you never let good, new fellows play on the nine. It's just the bunch you pick out, mostly friends of yours, and you want to run things to suit yourself."

"You're no friend of mine and you're on the nine," Clem said, with some justification. "How come?"

"It's because I know something about baseball and you know I know it," asserted Red, who was not overburdened with modesty.

"But there are some good new fellows here this year and they ought to be on the nine. Maybe if we had some new blood we'd win a few more games, including Lakeside and Elmwood."

"Who do you mean?" asked Clem, ready to bridle up in a moment.

"I mean those fellows from Tooksville—Buck and Larry Chester and Fred Margot," replied Red. "They can play good ball."

"Sure they can!" added Big Noyes.

"How do you know?" shot out Clem.

"Look here!" Red thrust a bunch of newspaper clipping under Clem's nose. They were clippings he had extracted, unknown to either Buck or Larry, from their room. The clippings told of the formation of the Canico River League, stressing the part played by Buck and Larry, and there were several stories of tight games in which Buck's hitting, Fred's catching, and, in particular, Larry's pitching, were featured.

"Say, they are some players!" echoed a number of the students as they scanned the cuttings.

"And that was great pitching!" declared Red, as he pointed to the account of the game with the Hornets.

"That's all a bunch of nonsense!" sneered Clem. "Just because a newspaper in a tank town says some kids play great ball, that's no reason for believing they do."

"Well, give them a chance to see what they can do!" urged Big. "The team isn't made up yet, is it?"

"It will be at the meeting to-night," Clem said. "I want all you fellows to report in the gym to-night," he went on. "We'll make up the nine then, select the subs, and talk about the schedule. Everybody on hand!"

"And if any fellow doesn't show up he can't play!" added Taffy.

"That goes, too!" cut in Lon, these two being "yes men" for Clem.

"Well, that's that," remarked Red, as he moved off with his chum.

"We gave Clem something to think about, anyhow," chuckled Big. "Wonder where Buck and the others are?"

"I saw them going to town a while ago. But they'll be back soon, and I'll tell them about the meeting to-night. They'd better be there if they want to play. That's the old rule."

"Oh, I guess they'll be there," came from Big Noyes. "But whether they get on the team or not is another question. I'm going to root for them, though!"

"So'll I. It's rotten that Clem has everything his own way. Time it was stopped."

"Sure! Even if we have to bust up the nine and start another."

"There are enough decent fellows for that,"

agreed Red. "Well, we'll see what happens."

Buck and Larry and Fred came back from town where they had gone during some vacant periods to indulge in sodas. Big and Red told them of the meeting call, omitting, however, all reference to what had taken place during the practice game.

"Sure, we'll be there!" Buck promised.

"But it won't do much good, I'm afraid," Larry added.

"Anyhow, we have a right to apply for places on the team," asserted Fred. "Clem can turn us down, but, by golly, if he does we'll make him go on record in the open!"

"Sure!" cried Buck.

There was a gathering of the baseball crowd on the campus in the early evening just preceding supper, and Buck and Larry and Fred, not wanting matters to come to a head before the meeting, strolled downtown again, intending to return in plenty of time. They were walking along one of the side streets when a voice from a house near a corner hailed them. They looked around to see a man limping toward them and Buck and Larry knew in an instant who it was.

"Mr. Pomeroy!" exclaimed Buck, with a smile.

"Sure! I thought I knew you boys! It would be sort of hard to forget you, after what you did for me," went on the old ball player.

"But what are you doing here in Broxley?"

"Going to the academy," Larry replied.

"No! Really? That's fine! Playing any ball?"

"Not yet—that is—" Buck began, with a look at Larry who shook his head slightly and introduced Fred as the best way of changing the subject. But Mr. Pomeroy was not to be put off.

"I always take in all the academy games," he went on. "Some of the older boys know me. They think I'm a nut on baseball, I guess, but that doesn't worry me. And, say, seeing you boys again makes me remember what I promised when you rescued me from the river."

"About showing me some pitching points?" asked Larry.

"That's it. You spoke of wanting to learn how to throw the fadeaway. Well, I'll be glad to teach you all I know. There are some better at it than I am, but I'll give you the system and after that it's up to you. You may develop it better than some or you may be a fizzle at it, Larry. Can't tell until I've seen you in practice. And while I'm at it, I'd like to do more for you. I'll give you some points on batting, if you like," he said to Buck.

"I sure would like!"

"How about catching?" asked Fred.

"Well, I never was much behind the bat," admitted Mr. Pomeroy. "But I've played in

some big games and I know what a catcher ought to do as the pitcher views it, so I might be able to coach you a little. Look here, boys, how's this. I feel I ought to repay you in some way for saving my life. Oh, I know you didn't do it because you thought you'd get anything out of it! You don't need to tell me that!" he went on, as he saw Buck and Larry shaking their heads. "But I'm grateful and I'd like to show it. So if you fellows make the nine I'll coach you as best I can in pitching, batting, and catching. And if the nine needs an all around coach I'll be glad to offer my services free. I'm that much interested."

"That's good of you!" said Larry.

"Not at all. Glad to do it. When does the nine organize?"

"To-night," Fred replied.

"Then I'm coming to the meeting," went on the veteran player. "Oh, I've been to them before," he added, as he saw the boys looking quizzically at one another. "They always let me in. So look for me at the meeting to-night."

"Gee, that's going some!" murmured Buck, as the three started back for the school.

"Think anything will come of it?" asked Fred.

"If you ask me," said Larry slowly, "I think a big row will come of it!"

The meeting was held in the gymnasium and most of the school was there, with the baseball

contingent up in front and Clem Carey presiding as manager. There was the usual inconsequential talk, some routine business was transacted. During this period Buck and Larry and Fred saw Mr. Pomeroy limp in and take a seat. He nodded to several of the older lads, who nodded in return.

Then came the matter of selecting the school nine for the season just opening. Clem arose, a paper in his hand.

"The following will be the regular players," he announced, as he read off a list of names, including his own, Taffy's, Lon's, that of Big Noyes, Red Browning, and several others whom the Tooksville boys had come to know more or less well. Then came the appointing of the substitutes, but the names of the Tooksville lads were not even among these.

"I guess that's all the business we have now," concluded Clem. "Everybody report for practice to-morrow on the grounds. If it rains we'll have a work-out here in the gym. That's all."

"May I have the privilege of the floor?" asked Mr. Pomeroy, getting up before the general exodus.

"What—er—who—" began Clem.

"It's Mr. Pomeroy," some one said.

"Well, what is it?" asked Clem, with little cordiality.

"I just want to say that there are some

friends of mine in this room," went on the lame veteran. "They did me a big service a few weeks ago—what it was doesn't matter. But I'd like to do something for them and for all you boys and in the interests of baseball, if you'll let me. I'd like to show my friends here, Larry and Buck Chester in particular, and a chum of theirs, Fred Margot, some baseball wrinkles. Then I'd like to coach your nine, free of charge."

"Good! Good!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Pomeroy!"

"We need a good coach!"

"We ought to have had one long ago!"

Clem Carey leaped to his feet at this enthusiastic outburst.

"This meeting's adjourned!" he shouted. "And we don't need any coach!" he added angrily. "That's all there is to it!"

"No, it isn't!" cried Big Noyes, and he had no difficulty in making himself heard above the din and racket. "It's about time somebody else had something to say about baseball besides Clem Carey!" he went on boldly.

"What do you mean by that?" shot out the bully.

"Just what I said!" calmly went on Big, who was a hard boy to bluff. "I say we need a coach and we ought to be mighty glad to have Mr. Pomeroy offer to help us!"

"Sure!" cried several.

"And another thing," went on Big. "I say we ought to take in some of the new fellows on the team, or they ought to be subs, anyhow. I nominate Buck and Larry Chester and Fred Margot."

"Second the motion!" cried Red before Clem could utter the protest that was on his lips.

"We don't want any tank-town players!" cried Lon.

"Who are those fellows, anyhow?" demanded Taffy, as if he did not know.

"They're good players, that's *what* they are!" asserted Red.

"Who says so?" sneered Lon.

"Here! Look at this!" cried Big, and, to the surprise, and somewhat to the discomfiture of the lads from Tooksville, their husky champion pulled out the bunch of newspaper clippings and began passing them around. Several boys read the notices and there was more than one comment of:

"They must be good if they can play like that!"

Others, siding with Big, Red, and the newcomers, began to say:

"Let's extend the list of subs!"

"Let 'em play on the regular nine."

"Sure! They can't be any worse than some we have!"

"Who do you mean that crack for, Bugs Brady?" cried Clem, singling out the lad who played left field.

"For myself as much as for anybody," said Bugs, with a frank laugh. "I'm rotten and I don't care who knows it."

"Speak for yourself then!" snapped Clem angrily. "The team is made up and there aren't going to be any more fellows on it. And we don't need any coach!"

"Oh, is that so?" came from Red. "Since when were you the Poo Bah who has it all to say?"

"He always has it all to say!" some one called out.

"I'll punch your face for that!" yelled Clem, rushing down from the platform. "I heard you, Jeff Dodge! I'll fix you!"

"Come on!" invited Jeff. "I'd just as soon fight as not!"

The two angry lads confronted each other while the others left their seats, crowding around and exultingly exclaiming:

"Fight! Fight! Gee, a fight!"

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW NINE

CLEM CAREY and Jeff Dodge did not fight, much as their chums wanted to see the encounter and ready as Jeff, at least, was to use his fists. Some of the older students, not of the ball-playing crowd, interposed and quieted that part of the dispute.

But the other part, the proposal to put the names of the Tooksville boys at least on the substitute list, would not down as easily.

"I say let them play!" cried Red.

"Sure!" asserted Big.

Then some of their friends took up the cry of:

"Get in some new blood!"

"Give 'em a chance!"

"We need new blood!"

"That's the talk!"

"I'll never do it! Never!" shouted Clem, who had never before been opposed in his arbitrary rule.

"What's the matter with the nine the way we have it arranged?" demanded Lon.

"Sure, it's all right!" said Taffy Stutz.
"Couldn't be better."

"It's punk, if you want to know. Part of it is, anyhow," called Big in his loud voice. "What say, fellows, don't we want the new lads on? Look at their records!"

"Sure we want 'em!" chorused a number.

Eager as Buck and Larry and Fred were to play, they much regretted that the newspaper clippings had been brought out in this public way. They realized, no matter how the matter went, that there would be some, perhaps even among their friends, who would think they had had a hand in passing the clippings around. Fred remarked that it was "like putting on a lot of dog."

But a movement had been started, a revolt against the iron and bullying rule of Clem Carey, and those who had long been waiting to break away from him now saw an opportunity.

"It's time we had a new nine!" said more than one.

Clem saw his power slipping, and, hastily consulting with his two cronies, shouted above the din that was now reigning:

"I'm manager of this team, and Taffy is captain. We say we don't need a coach nor any new players."

This stung Mr. Pomeroy to say:

"Boys, excuse me for having butted in. I love baseball, and I wanted to help my friends from Tooksville; but I certainly am not coming

in where I'm not wanted," and he started to leave the gymnasium.

"Just a moment, please, Mr. Pomeroy!" cried Big Noyes. "I know this is rotten to you, but this thing has got to be settled and it might as well be settled now as later. You aren't the real fight—it's Buck and Larry Chester and Fred Margot. We're going to have them on the team!"

"Oh, are you? Since when were you the manager?" demanded Clem, who heard this last.

"I have one vote, and that's all you have!" retorted the husky lad. "And this thing will be voted on. There's a motion before the house."

"What do you mean—motion?" sneered Clem, whose knowledge of parliamentary law was a little less than nothing.

"There was a motion to add the names of Buck and Larry Chester and Fred Margot!" shouted Red.

"And it was seconded," Big reminded the bully.

"That's right! Question! Question!" called several.

"What do you mean—question? Who wants to ask any questions?" stammered Clem, looking around wildly.

"That means you must put it to a vote," prompted Lon in a low voice.

"Vote on what?"

"On letting these new fellows belong to the nine!"

"They'll never belong while I'm manager!" stormed Clem. "And you're captain, Taffy. What do you say?"

"They can't play on my team!" declared Taffy.

"Then that settles it!" yelled Clem. "Shut up, you fellows! This meeting is over. We have all we want on the nine and we aren't going to have any coach. Though I'm much obliged to you for offering," he said haltingly to Mr. Pomeroy, as Taffy nudged him.

But the storm was not yet over. From all sides of the gymnasium came the demand:

"Question! Question! Question!"

"By golly, what do they mean?" Clem was plainly puzzled by this.

"It means you have to let it come to a vote," explained Taffy. "Go on. Let them vote. We can beat 'em!"

"I don't believe so," was Lon's opinion. "Big and Red have a lot of fellows with 'em. See if you can't shut 'em up!"

Clem tried, threatening that if the meeting did not adjourn then and there, leaving the nine as he had planned it, he and many of his friends would drop out.

"Drop out then!"

"Drop down a well!"

“Vote! Vote!”

“Question! Question!”

The meeting got so disorderly that several prefects, who were assigned to it, decided it was best to call the dean, and he finally came when the pandemonium was at its height.

It needed but his calm appearance on the scene to end the storm, at least temporarily, but when he asked what the trouble was there was such a babel of voices that he smiled and, picking out one or two lads in turn, among them being Big Noyes, stipulated that only one talk at a time.

When this rule prevailed and when both sides, including a considerable bluster of talk from Clem Carey, had been disposed of, the dean judicially gave his decision:

“This matter should be decided by a vote of the Athletic Association as a whole. It is the only fair way.”

“Atta baby!” cried one enthusiast before he realized he was thus praising the venerable dean. But Dean Werth Cartright was amused by such honest, well-meant slips as that and only smiled.

“See, it’s got to come to a vote,” whispered Taffy to Clem. “I told you that’s what question meant.”

“All right,” Clem growled. “Let ’em vote. We’ll beat ’em yet!”

But the revolt, long contemplated, against

Clem Carey's highhanded rule, had gone too far to be checked. Like wildfire the news was flashed through the school that a big change was pending in the baseball nine, and several members of the Athletic Association, to which all active sport-loving students were eligible, hurried to attend the meeting. They had supposed it would be of the usual cut and dried sort, but it was evident there was a new spirit in Broxley since the advent of Buck and Larry Chester. It was not so much these lads themselves, as it was the symbol of their presence.

There was soon a seething meeting in progress, and as Clem was not the chairman of the Athletic Association as a whole, this position being held by a senior, James Thornton, there was thus insured a fairness impossible to attain before.

The matter was brought into the open. Big and his friends insisted on their right to name new members of the nine, and this was not disputed, though Clem tried to bluster it down, aided by Lon and Taffy. And after Buck and Larry and Fred, when called on, had modestly said they would like to play but did not want to come in if objected to, there was a vote taken, the three candidates, of course, not participating.

It was some little time before the result was known, for Clem and his friends insisted on

formal balloting. But in the end the three Tooksville lads were chosen on the nine by a decisive number of votes.

"Well, that settles it!" angrily cried Clem, as the result was announced. "I'm through!"

"So am I!" added Taffy.

"I'm quitting!" echoed Lon.

"And now where's your nine?" demanded Clem, as several others whom he dominated also announced that they would no longer play.

"Where's your nine now?"

"We'll get up a new nine!" cried Big Noyes. "It's time we had one, anyhow."

"That's right! A new nine!" cried Red. "And with Mr. Pomeroy as coach!"

"No, boys! No!" said the lame man, getting up. "I don't want to now. I'm afraid I made a lot of trouble as it was!"

"You stick, please!" cried Big. "We'll need you, Mr. Pomeroy!"

"You'll need a lot more than a coach if you want to win any games," sneered Clem as he and his friends prepared to leave the hall.

"And you needn't come to us to help you out of a hole! I'm through for good!"

"We'll try to get along without you!" chuckled Red.

"Oh, you will!" sneered the bully. "Well, let me tell you something," and he looked at Buck and Larry. "You are going to make a

mess of this!" and he roared the words as he hurried out.

"I guess he means he'll try to queer things," suggested Larry.

"Well, we'll watch him," answered Buck.
"And now I wonder what the next move is."

CHAPTER XVI

LARRY'S FADEAWAY

"Now, boys," came the voice of James Thornton, the chairman of the Athletic Association, "since you've settled this one point of admitting new members to the nine and since some have withdrawn, which was their right, I would suggest that you now proceed to organize a new team. The season is about to start and you'll need a lot of practice if you're going to win games."

"We want to beat Elmywood and Lakeside!" some one called out.

"It's never been done," another added.

"Well, we're going to do it now!" declared Big Noyes. "We have some new material now, a new pitcher, a new catcher, and, where did you say you played?" he asked Buck.

"Center field."

"Why, then we have three players for the very places that Clem, Lon, and Taffy used to fill!" cried Red. "That's great!"

"Say, don't run away with the idea that we're marvels!" exclaimed Larry, quick to

sense what would happen if too much were expected of the new members.

"Well, you can't be any worse than Clem and his bunch," said Big Noyes, "and that means you'll probably be better. Come on, fellows! Let's get together and reorganize the team."

"Sure!" came the general chorus.

As might have been expected, there were some disputes and a little ill-feeling caused by the recent clash. But in the end, and under the guidance of the Athletic Association officials, the new nine was tentatively made up as follows:

Dave Browning, first base and captain, Hanson Allen, third base, Buck Chester, center field, Nat Noyes, second base and manager, Larry Chester, pitcher, Fred Margot, catcher, Ferg Plant, right field, Bugs Brady, left field and Jeff Dodge short stop. Charles Coleman was picked as substitute pitcher and Ramsey Ryan as substitute catcher. A number of other substitutes, in the main those who were on the original list, were named and then the meeting adjourned.

"Practice to-morrow, fellows!" ordered Red Browning, the new captain. "Everybody on the job!"

"Sure!" came the chorus, and in much better feeling and tone than when Clem had previously ordered it.

"How about you, Larry?" asked Red, as he and the Tooksville lads walked toward the nearest soda counter for refreshments after the strenuous session. "Do you think you can really do some pitching that will pull us out of the rut we were in?"

"I'll do my best," was the promise.

"And his best is going to be pretty good," declared Mr. Pomeroy, who had withdrawn from the meeting when the Athletic Committee took charge, but who had waited outside. "I'm going to show Larry some real professional stuff."

"Good for you!" cried Big Noyes. "Maybe," he went on with a rather wistful note in his booming voice, "we can beat Elmwood for once in our lives."

"We will! And Lakeside, too!" cried Red.

"Don't bite off more than you can chew," advised Jeff Dodge, with a laugh.

Mr. Pomeroy limped off, promising to meet Larry and give him some coaching and instruction in the morning before the practice game with the scrubs, the young pitcher having a free period just before noon.

So that hour of the next day found him with a supply of old balls and his small catching glove out in front of the wire backstop on the school diamond. Mr. Pomeroy was there, and so was Fred Margot, who had ventured to cut

a class, which he could afford to do as he stood well in the subject.

"Now, Larry," began the veteran pitcher, as he told Fred to get on his big mitt and stand ready to receive, "I know you understand something about delivery and the pitching of the usual outs, ins, and drops. That's the stock in trade of every twirler. But as I understand it, your team, to beat these two other schools, must have something they haven't in their bag of tricks, and I think I can give it to you in what is called a fadeaway ball."

"Is there really any such animal?" asked Fred. "I mean," he hastened to say, "I've read about this fadeaway ball, and so has Larry, but we never saw anybody pitch it."

"And I never could manage it, though I've done everything the book says," Larry admitted.

"It takes a certain knack and it is not easy to master," admitted Mr. Pomeroy. "It took me a long time, and I was never really perfect in it. But I managed to fool quite a few in my day," and he smiled a little proudly at the remembrance of his former life.

"You both know," he went on, "that what is now known as the fadeaway ball is credited to the late Christy Mathewson. Whether he really discovered it or evolved it from some of his other famous twirls, I don't know, and yet I was acquainted with him. In fact, he showed

me what I know. But, at any rate, Christy worked the fadeaway to perfection. He really was the master of it, and yet he did not in any sense depend on this one style of delivery for his success. His marvelous control of the ball, not only in serving the fadeaway, but in shooting his ins, outs, and drops, is what made Christy the success he was.

“So much for that. Now what is the fadeaway?” asked Mr. Pomeroy. Without waiting for an answer, he went on: “It’s really an out curve, which almost any boy can throw after a little practice. But there is this difference about the fadeaway. It is delivered with the palm of the hand downward. That’s the big thing to remember.”

“I see!” exclaimed Larry with enthusiasm. “And in the out curve the palm is upward, isn’t it?”

“Exactly,” agreed Mr. Pomeroy. “And in the out curve, with the palm upward, your thumb is naturally pointing toward third base. That is, if you’re a right-hand pitcher, as I see you are.”

“Is that all you have to remember?” asked Fred, who was thumping his big mitt to make a pocket in it to receive the balls Larry would soon be sending in.

“Oh, no,” answered the veteran pitcher. “While Larry must bear in mind that to throw the fadeaway he must keep his palm down

and his thumb toward first base, he must also recollect to get an arm motion in the direction of third base. It's very awkward at the start. The fadeaway is what might be called a sort of overhand throw variation of the out curve with the arm as it comes down, sweeping toward third base. Like this."

Mr. Pomeroy demonstrated, sending the ball with a thud into Fred's glove. It did not come with as much force as the young catcher had expected.

"Not much speed to it," Larry remarked, as he stood behind his instructor in the pitching box and watched his delivery.

"No, the fadeaway isn't a fast ball," was the answer. "And you must not use it too often. It should be served with a varied delivery of ins, outs, drops, and straight fast balls to fool the batter. You can't continue to pitch fadeaways, two or three, one right after the other."

"Why not?" asked Larry.

"In the first place, any tricky ball, too frequently served, loses its ability to fool the batter. In the second place, the fadeaway is a great strain on the pitching arm and wrist of even a strong pitcher, and it would be fatal to your career, Larry, to indulge in it too often. You'd lame yourself. Now watch me again."

Once more he pitched the ball, with the palm

down, his thumb toward first base, but at the delivery the arm and wrist motioned over toward third in a circular sweep and the ball went whizzing toward Fred.

But as it neared home plate, where a batter would have stood in a game, the ball literally faded away with such a queer, lazy motion that it would have effectually fooled anyone not prepared for it.

"That's how it's done, Larry," said the old pitcher, with a smile. "Now let's see you try it."

"I don't believe I can do it, Mr. Pomeroy."

"You can't until you try, that's sure!" was the answer, with a laugh. "Come here and I'll show you how to hold the ball."

Larry soon mastered the theory, but when he tried to throw and to remember to keep his palm down and his thumb toward first base and, at the same time, get an arm motion toward third, it was rather an awkward failure.

"I can't do it!" he said despondently.

"Yes, you can!" cried his mentor. "You aren't going to give up that easily! Now once more."

Larry now went at it in earnest, and, after a few more trials, he succeeded in getting the ball into Fred's mitt with almost the right tantalizing slow, twisting motion.

"Great!" cried the catcher, jumping up from

his squatting position. "That was fine, Larry!"

"Was it? I'm glad! But, gee, it does strain your wrist!" he said with a wry face.

"Yes, and you mustn't do it too much at the start," said Mr. Pomeroy. "Now a couple more shots and you're done."

Again Larry wound up, this time with more confidence, and that fadeaway was the best of his efforts. As it thudded into Fred's glove he saw a smile of satisfaction on his chum's face, and Larry himself noted that the ball died out in a manner that would have baffled most batters.

Then Larry saw something else. It was the sneering face of Clem Carey peering out from behind a small refreshment stand at one side of the backstop. The former manager of the nine had been watching the fadeaway practice.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SCRUB GAME

REALIZING that he had been observed spying, Clem Carey jumped back, and so quickly that it seemed neither Mr. Pomeroy nor Fred Margot had seen him. Sensing this, Larry Chester said nothing, though he was doing a great deal of thinking.

"What's the matter?" asked Fred, noting his chum's sudden start after that last fade-away delivery. "Did it hurt much?"

"A little," Larry admitted, and with truth.

"Then we'll call it a day," said the veteran pitcher. "You can try out the fadeaway in practice a little this afternoon, Larry, but don't overdo it."

"I won't," was the promise. But what had caused Larry's start was not the wince from his strained wrist; it was the discovery of the deposed manager spying.

"He's up to some trick," Larry thought, as he walked in from the box. "But what?"

The most natural inference, of course, was that Clem Carey, not being on the regular nine now, would manage to convey the news of

Larry's new, secret curve to those who would most profit by it.

"And that would be the nines of the other schools that we play," Larry reasoned. "But any fellow who would throw the game of his own school, even after what happened, would be a skunk! Maybe, though, Clem is a skunk. I'm going to be on the watch."

So Larry said nothing to his chums about the matter, but resolved to keep his eyes open. However, there was no sign of Clem or any of his cronies on the diamond during practice that afternoon, nor, later, when he met Larry, did Clem say anything or refer to the fact of having been concealed near the refreshment stand at the backstop.

Naturally, matters did not go very smoothly at first with the newly organized nine. The advent of three new players, while hailed with delight as the beginning of a new régime, did not at once add to the skillfulness of the playing. That it was a bit ragged, even the hopeful Mr. Pomeroy had to admit. He was on hand to coach the lads as he had promised. He would not let Larry pitch his fadeaway in this practice.

"We don't want any tricks now," said the veteran. "What we want to do is to get you boys to playing as a team. After that we can put on some frills."

The result was that the regulars won the

practice game from the scrubs by only one run, and Big Noyes and Red, who had rather hoped for better results, were disappointed.

"But it's early yet," Bugs Brady consoled them. "Give us a chance."

"What do you think of the new boys?" asked Big Noyes.

"They're good," declared Jeff Dodge. "Larry has something on the ball, Buck's a good fielder and batter, just what we needed, and Fred is good behind the bat."

"Then maybe we'll win some games," said Red hopefully, this talk taking place in the absence of the three from Tooksville.

"We ought to," declared Jeff.

From then on there was hard and fast practice almost every afternoon for the Broxley nine, and it was soon evident that the boys were playing in better spirit and with greater confidence and skill than ever before. Some of the old members remarked this.

"It's because Mr. Pomeroy is coaching us," suggested Buck.

"Well, that has something to do with it," admitted Big Noyes. "But I think you three fellows are a factor."

"Don't make us blush!" entreated Larry.

"No, this is the straight goods," insisted the genial, big chap. "You really helped us save the nine, for it was going to pieces."

"You flatter us," said Fred, mincing his words and bowing.

"No flattery about it," laughed Red Browning. "The coming here of you fellows started the fight with Clem, and a fight was just what was needed to put us on our feet."

"Oh, well if we started a fight, that's all right!" chuckled Buck.

Though there was a jesting spirit about what Big Noyes and Red Browning had said, there was considerable truth back of it, as more than one old member of the nine admitted. A different spirit was being manifested since the advent of Buck and Larry, and though they could not be credited with the responsibility for all of it, some commendation was due them.

So the practice went on until the regulars were playing well and smoothly together. Larry was being coached at every available period by Mr. Pomeroy, who also gave some good points on batting and fielding to Buck and helped Fred correct some of the errors he had fallen into behind home plate. The nine, in general, was told how to play snappier, better and more strategic baseball.

Larry and his chums were rather surprised that no hostile move was made by Clem Carey and his cronies following their dramatic withdrawal from the reorganization meeting. But the bully was only biding his time, as events soon proved. For having spied on Larry at

fadeaway practice (though, as a matter of fact, Clem did not attach as much importance to that as it deserved) and burning for revenge, the ex-pitcher hit on a method of accomplishing it.

"Here's what we'll do!" the bully told his particular friends, Taffy Stutz and Lon Snoper. "We'll join the scrubs."

"Play on the scrubs after having played on the regulars?" cried Lon. "Not much! I'm beginning to wish we hadn't quit!"

"Oh, are you?" asked Clem sneeringly. "All right, cry-baby! Go on back and join 'em, if they'll have you."

"That's just it—I don't believe they will," said Lon, somewhat bitterly.

"Of course they won't! Well, then, here's how we'll get square. We three will join the scrubs. They're a rotten bunch of players now. But with us three they'll have a good team."

"What's the sense in making up a good scrub nine?" asked Taffy. "They only get knocked around, do all the hard, dirty work, and the regulars get all the credit when they play match games."

"Listen!" and Clem's voice sank to a whisper. "If we three play on the scrubs we'll strengthen the nine. And with us on their nine the scrubs will beat the regulars."

"Beat the regulars!" exclaimed Lon and Taffy incredulously.

"Sure! We can do it! They aren't so much,

even with these three new pills from Tooksville!" sneered Clem. "And if we dump the regulars, with that Larry Chester in the box, it will make them sick and it will make him sick, as well as those two he's always with. Let the scrubs, with us on the team, beat the regulars, and there'll be a howl around here."

"I should say so!" agreed Lon.

"If we can do it," stipulated Taffy.

"Sure we can do it!" Clem asserted. "And that will show 'em we can play ball and maybe—I'm not saying I'll go back on the regular team, but they'll probably ask us. Then we can say 'nothing doing!' How do you like that?"

"It'll be great if it works!" exclaimed Taffy.

"But Larry can pitch!" ventured Lon.

"Bunk! He's got nothing but the regular curves, and I guess he isn't so hot at them, for this Pomeroy has to be showing him something after every game. He's a bag of wind, if you ask me," Clem sneered.

"Well, maybe he is," agreed Lon. "But the regulars have been beating the pants off the scrubs lately."

"They won't when we play on the scrubs!" predicted Clem. "Now let's get busy!"

It did not occasion much remark when the three leading spirits of the revolt appeared in uniform on the diamond a little later and mingled with the scrubs. A few days after this

Clem and his cronies played with the scrubs against the regulars with no remarkable results. Then it was announced that what was in the nature of a "big game" between the two school nines would take place on Saturday afternoon. Word that the contest was to be "for blood" got around; so there was a big crowd on hand when the umpire gave the word:

"Play ball!"

"This is something like!" remarked Larry, as he went to the box.

"Just like old times!" agreed Buck, walking out to center field.

"Go a bit easy at first, Larry," cautioned Fred. "And don't give 'em too many fade-aways."

"I'll save those," the young pitcher promised.

This was the first game that could be called a real contest in which the three chums had taken part since coming to Broxley. Of course, on the face of it, there was not much at stake, since it was taken for granted that the regulars would beat the scrubs, as they always had done.

"But I don't just like Clem and his two pals suddenly joining the second team," mused Mr. Pomeroy. "However, I don't see what can happen."

Taffy Stutz was first up for the scrubs, and, knowing little about his batting ability, Larry

fed him a teaser at the start. Somewhat to the surprise of the pitcher and the other regulars, Taffy leaned on his bat for all he was worth and sent out as pretty a two-bagger as could have been seen in a match game.

"Good eye!" yelled Clem. "That's the way to do it!"

"Run! Run!" besought Lon, and Taffy legged it for second.

To add to the discomfiture of the regulars, Ferg Plant, out in right, stumbled and fell as he was racing after the ball which got beyond him, and there was a derisive yell from the ranks of the scrubs.

"Not so good!" mused Larry, when Ferg eventually got the horsehide and shot it in, while Taffy perched mockingly on the second base.

The next batter up was Sim Burton, and Larry knew he had the reputation of being a good hitter.

"I'll fool him on the fadeaway," Larry thought. "It will be a good chance to try it." But first he shot an in curve, which Sim did not nibble at, though the umpire called a strike. Then Larry shot in a fast, straight one, which, however, went wide and counted for a fourth of the necessary number of balls for a walking pass.

"Now for it!" murmured Larry a moment later.

He wound up, shot the ball out of his hand with the palm down and tried to deflect his wrist as Mr. Pomeroy had told him. At first it seemed that the ball would fulfill its mission and fool the batter. But Sim stepped up to meet it, got his bat right on the nose, and soaked it for two bags, bringing in Taffy with the first run of the game.

"Bad! Bad!" murmured Larry, as he saw what had happened. "I haven't got that fade-away down yet where I want it. I've got to go slow!"

There was riotous jubilation in the ranks of the scrubs as the first run came in, and Clem smiled meaningly at his cronies.

"It'll do 'em good to get beaten, maybe," mused Mr. Pomeroy on the bench near the dug-out. "They'll play all the better for it."

Two hits from the first two men up rather nettled Larry and, resolving to forget the new fadeaway for a time, he pitched as he had used to pitch on the Resolutes, with the result that he made a neat and easy out of the next man up. Then came Clem, and there was an ugly look on that bully's face as he looked at Larry.

"Ball!" cried the umpire immediately after the first delivery.

"Who told you that you could pitch?" sneered Clem, waving his bat.

Larry did not answer, but quickly sent in the fadeaway, making a sudden decision to try

it in this crisis. To his delight it completely fooled Clem, who fanned the air with a queer look on his ugly face.

"How do you like that?" asked Fred, grinning through his mask.

"Oh, shut up!" retorted the bully.

Larry's next was his regular out, but Clem was enough of a player to know how to receive that, and he did, right on the end of his bat, so it was good for three bags and another run came in.

"Gee! what's the matter with us to-day?" mused Buck out in center field as he raced after the ball Clem had knocked away over his head. "We're punk!"

And when the inning ended, with three runs for the scrubs, even some of the most enthusiastic supporters of the regulars began to wonder if the recent changes had been wisely made.

"I told you how it would be," chuckled Clem to his cronies, when his side was retired and the regulars came to the bat. "A big bunch of stiffes, those Tooksville lads!"

It did not look any better for the regulars when they got only one run in their half of the first, and this was brought in by Buck, who got a single, followed by a two-bagger on the part of Big Noyes and a single by Larry.

For a time it looked as if the regulars had struck their stride, but Fred proved easy meat for Charles Coleman, the scrub pitcher, who

was also sub on the regulars. Bugs Brady and Jeff Dodge also struck out, and when the regulars took the field again the score was against them.

“You’ll have to do better, boys,” the coach told them. “What’s the matter?”

“Those scrubs have all the breaks!” complained Red.

“Well, go and get yourselves some,” advised Mr. Pomeroy.

CHAPTER XVIII

BROXLEY VS. TAPPER

“STRIKE!” called the umpire.

A pleased smile stole over the face of Larry Chester.

“Well, he fell for that,” the young pitcher mused as he got the ball back from Fred. “I didn’t feed him the fadeaway, either. It was my old drop.”

In succession, though interspersed by two balls, Larry worked a cross-fire delivery on the batter and soon had him out. It was the first of the scrubs to go down in the beginning of the second inning and it looked as if the regulars were beginning to come back. The more so, as Larry struck out another man, though the second one up got his base on balls, which was the first time this had happened to Larry for many months. It was not intentional, either, as might have been the case.

“Don’t worry. We’ll get this next one,” said Fred consolingly.

But Gene Gladsby proved the surprise of the day, for he whanged out a home run which, bringing in the man Larry had walked, made

two more runs for the scrubs, and the stock of the regulars went down while Clem and his cronies exulted.

Then a great change came over the regulars. To a man, they stiffened, and, with Larry tightening up in the box and making a clean strike out of the next man up, there was a big difference.

It was time they did so, too, for when the regular team got into its winning stride the score for the scrubs was five and for the school team only two, which was how it stood when the fourth inning opened.

From then on it was a runaway for the regulars. Though there were necessarily a few scattered hits off Larry, and he passed two more men, due to the ache in his wrist on account of trying the fadeaway, not another run was secured by the scrubs.

On the other hand, the regulars began batting Charles Coleman with such deadly effect that when the sixth inning closed the school team had ten runs and the scrubs were still only five. They could not get another man across the plate. Nor did Clem make matters any better when, after a conference with the scrubs, he went in as pitcher. He was as badly hit as Coleman had been, and when the Tooksville lads and their friends got on to Clem's curves they hammered him all over the lot so that even some of the scrub supporters yelled:

"Take him out!"

"He's rotten!"

"He has a glass arm!"

But Clem insisted on staying in the box, with the result that six more runs eventually came in for the regulars and the game finally ended in a grandstand finish of two men coming in ahead of Buck who knocked a home run.

The final score was Regulars 16, Scrubs 5.

"Who told you that you could play ball?" jeered several at Clem.

"Wouldn't play on the regulars, and now the scrubs won't have you!" yelled a lad.

"Ha! Ha!"

"Shut up!" retorted Clem, angrily pulling off his pitching glove and striding from the field. "I'll punch your nose!"

"You'd better punch the time clock and quit!" some one advised him. Clem was furious, nor were his feelings bettered when Lon casually remarked:

"I thought they'd be too much for us."

"Too much, you big stiff!" cried Clem.

"They wouldn't have been if you fellows had given me any support!"

"Support!" cried Taffy. "What do you want, anyhow?"

"I want to see those Tooksville stiffes put off the team; that's what I want!" snapped Clem.

"And I'm going to see it happen, too!"

"How?" asked Lon.

"Never mind. I'll show you! I'll have my revenge on them and on some others who spilled these beans, and don't you forget it!" threatened Clem, and he glared at Big Noyes who, with Red, was congratulating Larry on the outcome of the game.

"Well, you are beginning to play ball," remarked Mr. Pomeroy, as he mingled with the regulars. "A few more practice games, and you'll be ready for your first match game."

"Against Tapper Military," remarked Red.

"We generally beat them," added Big.

"Don't take it for granted," warned the coach. "There are some new elements in this nine and there may be some in theirs. I want you to play as hard as you can. And, Larry, you and I will need a few more sessions. You aren't getting that fadeaway just right."

"I realize that," Larry admitted.

In the days that followed—days of hard practice—not only Larry, but most of the other regular players showed considerable improvement. Buck learned a few new tricks of batting, especially in the art of bunting, and it was a real art, Mr. Pomeroy said. Fred Margot, too, found that there was much he had to learn about his position behind home plate, and Mr. Pomeroy gave him several hours of special work, pitching to him in a secluded place.

But it was with Larry that the veteran worked most carefully and most persistently,

and the fadeaway was the hardest nut to crack. At times Larry thought he had it down pat, then would come a slip-up and the ball went wild.

"I'll never do it!" he said despairingly, more than once.

"Yes, you will!" Mr. Pomeroy insisted. "Nothing good ever comes easily, and once you have this it will be worth as much to you as any two of your other curves. But use it sparingly. Feed it to a batter only once in a while or he'll get wise to it. Now try once more. How's your wrist?"

"All right!"

"Good! Let me know the moment it feels strained, for it's fatal to keep on after that."

Larry followed this advice to the letter and refrained from using the fadeaway except twice in scrub games from which Clem and his cronies absented themselves. A few days before the annual contest with the military academy, Mr. Pomeroy said:

"Well, Larry, I think you have it!"

"You mean the fadeaway?"

"Yes. You haven't slipped up on it the last three days, and that's a pretty good test. But go slow with it. Think of it as a trick in reserve and use it only when you can't get out of a hole any other way. It's a big asset. Don't waste it."

"I won't. Gee, it's great to think I really have mastered it!"

"Oh, I don't say you have *mastered* it!" retorted Mr. Pomeroy quickly. "Few pitchers have ever done that. But you have the knack of it, and, with practice, ought to be able to make effective use of it. I think you'll make out all right."

"I hope so, Mr. Pomeroy, and I sure am much obliged to you for all your trouble."

"No trouble at all, Larry. I can't forget what you did for me. I might be at the bottom of the river now if it hadn't been for you and your brother."

"Oh, I guess somebody would have pulled you out if we hadn't been there," said Larry.

After another week of practice, which was agreeably relieved, at least to Buck and Larry, by seeing Nell Mason and Flora Maywood, a final hard contest with the scrubs was called and was won by a good margin by the regulars.

Then came the day of the great game with Tapper Military Academy. It was great in the sense that it was the first big match contest of the season, and it was great for the lads from Tooksville because, for the first time, they were playing on a fairly important academy nine. It was very different from playing on the Resolutes, much as they had liked to do that.

The game took place on the military academy

grounds, the contest the year before having been played at Broxley, the alternating system being used.

"Big crowd," observed Larry as, with his friends, he descended from the bus that had brought the team from Broxley and started for the gymnasium dressing rooms.

"Fine crowd," agreed Buck. "There go the girls," he added, as he saw Nell and Flora skirting the throng in going to their places in the grandstand.

"Yes, and there go Clem and Taffy!" exclaimed Larry. "Right after 'em, like a cow's tail."

"Well, we have to play ball," remarked Buck, with just a trace of regret in his voice.

"We can see them after," Larry said.

"Who, Clem?"

"I should say not! I meant the girls!"

"Oh!" and Buck smiled.

The two teams went out for practice, and Buck and Larry and their friends noted that the military lads were very snappy at it.

"But we have some snap ourselves," Fred Margot said, when this was commented on. "How's the old pitching arm, Larry?"

"Fine! I can work hard!"

"We may have to," said Buck.

The military cadets did some drilling and parading, their band played, and, altogether, it was a gala affair, even before the game

started. Then came the final consultation of the two captains, Mike Burke, the husky left fielder of the cadets, serving in that capacity. Ground rules were decided on, the batting orders submitted, and finally the umpire, donning his mask and protectors, took the new, white ball from the red box.

"Ready?" he asked Dave Browning for Broxley.

"Ready!" was the answer.

"How about you?" to the captain of Tapper.

"Sure! Fire!" answered Mike Burke, with a grin.

The military lads were to bat last, as the game was on their home grounds, and the Broxley team took their positions on the bench in the dugout. Red Browning, up first, picked up his bat, nodding to Hanson Allen and Buck, who were to follow him in that order, to be in readiness. There was a moment of silent expectation in the bleachers and grandstand, Hen Hamilton, the Tapper pitcher, caught the white sphere the umpire tossed to him, and that official cried:

"Play ball!"

CHAPTER XIX

BUCK GOES HOME

RED BROWNING stood at the plate, moving his bat about in small circles. Hen Hamilton, the Tapper Academy pitcher, flapped the fingers of his gloved hand on the clean white ball, wound up suddenly, and shot it in.

"Strike!" came sharply from the umpire without hesitation.

"Atta baby!" encouragingly yelled Lon Morgan, the cadet catcher to Hen. "He'll bite at the next one."

"Don't fool yourself!" chuckled Red. There was the best of good feeling between players of the two schools.

Contrary to what he expected, the next ball seemed good to Red and he swung at it hard—and missed.

"Strike two!"

"What's the matter?" murmured Larry in some wonder.

"Doesn't look so good!" agreed Buck.

"Oh, we're just feeling 'em out," said Big Noyes.

There was a moment's pause. Then:

“Ball one!”

“Wait him out, Red! Wait him out!” advised Mr. Pomeroy, who was present as official coach of Broxley.

Red waited, but he did not wait long enough, for he hit the next ball into easy reaching distance of Walter Mulby, the short, who promptly threw the first Broxley man out at the initial bag.

“One down!” exulted the cadets.

Hanson Allen was up next. He singled, which gave Buck a good chance to score him. But the best Buck could get was a double, and though this put Hanson on third, there was still some hard work to do when Big Noyes came to the bat.

“Strike him out!” came the call from the stands, and that’s just what Hen did, much to the chagrin of the Big Noise, who wanted a chance to shine that day, as a particular girl was present.

“Well, Larry, it’s up to you!” said Mr. Pomeroy, as the pitcher went to bat. “But remember, don’t strain your arm hitting.”

“I’ll only knock a single,” chuckled Larry. “That’ll bring in Hanson Allen and let me off easy.”

He was only joking, of course, but he did manage, after it was two and two on him, to get a pretty hit and Hanson Allen came home.

with the first run of the game, while Buck raced to third.

"Now Fred, another hit!" begged Mr. Pomeroy, as the doughty catcher came to the plate. But it was not Fred Margot's lucky moment, and he fouled out, which left Buck and Larry disconsolately on bases.

"Well, we've got a start, anyhow," said Larry, as he put on his glove and went to the pitching box. "Now I'll see what I can do. I've got to do my best."

Mr. Pomeroy had been giving him some final instructions as he sat near him on the bench, and Larry now put some of them into use as he faced the batter in the first real game of the season.

Lon Morgan was up to start off, and rumor had it that Lon was a good hitter. So Larry was careful what he fed him, varying his delivery and not attempting the fadeaway until he had warmed up a bit. But Lon unexpectedly hit Larry's fastest ball and soaked it far out in left field for a three-bagger, which brought the fans in the stands to their feet with wild yells.

"Not so good!" murmured Larry.

However, Ward Hickey, the next man up, proved an easy victim to Larry's outs and ins, so there was no need to try the fadeaway. But when Ted Young got up Larry, realizing that Lon was on third just eager to come in, decided

to try the new delivery. He did not use it at first, however. Ted was the best hitter on the cadet team, and it behooved a pitcher to be careful what he served him.

"Ball!" was the umpire's decision of the first delivery, and, though there were some good-natured jeers at Larry, the pitcher did not mind, for he had purposely thrown wide.

Then he whipped in an out, but Ted hit it, though the ball had a twist on it that made it go foul, out of reach, however, of Fred Margot, desperately as he tried for it.

"Well, now for the in," murmured Larry. He sent in a good one, Ted bit and fanned the wind.

"Two strikes!" cried the umpire.

"And if this works it will be three!" thought Larry. He had decided to give the batter the fadeaway.

Remembering all that the coach had told him about keeping his palm down and sweeping his descending arm in the direction of third base, Larry shot the ball in. It was almost perfect. Up it sailed toward the batter, who, so Larry could see by his eyes, thought at last he had just what he wanted for a mighty soak. But the ball literally faded away as it neared the plate, so the bat passed it in midair and the horsehide nestled safely in Fred's big mitt.

"Three strikes! Batter's out!" yelled the umpire, and with an exasperated gesture Ted

Young flung the stick from him and walked back to the bench.

"Has their new pitcher got anything?" asked Sim Todd, who was up next.

"I'll say he has!" was the grim reply, and this was balm to Larry.

However, Larry did not use the fadeaway on Sim, estimating him as one who could be easily tempted by other deliveries. But something went wrong. Even as he threw in the first ball to this new batter, Larry realized that his arm and wrist had been a bit strained by the first fadeaway he had pitched. He could not control his delivery, and though he managed to get one strike on Sim, and though Sim hit one foul, the others were all balls and the player walked to first.

Buck and some of the other Broxley players thought something had happened to their pitcher, especially when Walter Mulby singled and Lon Morgan brought in a run. But Larry tightened up after that, and it was the end of the scoring for that second half of the first inning.

From then on the game was a seesaw, with first one team ahead and then the other. In a tight place, Larry again used his fadeaway on Joe Ramsey, another heavy hitter, and fooled him completely, retiring the side in that inning with two men on base.

So matters went until the ninth inning when the score was 7 to 8 in favor of the cadets.

"This is something that hasn't happened for a long while," remarked Big Noyes, as his side came in to take their stick work for the first half of the ninth. "Unless we do something, we're licked."

"We'll do something!" declared Bugs Brady.

"If we don't, Clem and his bunch will give us the ha-ha," said Hanson Allen gloomily.

Buck and Larry heard this talk and realized that they, and perhaps Fred Margot, more than any other players, must bear the brunt of failure, if failure there was to be, for they were in a measure responsible for the change in the team. If they did not make good after the number of times Broxley had beaten the cadets while Clem was manager, it would look as though the bully was justified in his objections to a change.

"Buck, it's up to you," remarked Larry, as his brother took a seat beside him while Red went to bat.

"It looks so," was the answer. "I've got to get a homer, or something."

The cadets had played hard, better than they had ever played before, to get this lead over their old rivals. There was a riot of yells from the stands now, demands to retire the Broxley

players without a score, which would mean the winning of the game for the cadets.

"Boys, you have just one chance left," the coach warned them.

Red Browning, after a perilous moment when it was two and two on him, hit a pretty single. Hanson Allen followed with a two-bagger which took Red, however, only to third. Then Buck came to bat.

"Home run, Buck! Home run!" begged his chums, who had heard or read of his prowess with the stick. "We need a home run!"

"I'll do my best," Buck promised.

He let the first ball pass, though it was called a strike. He let the second go by, and there was a great strain on his friends until the umpire decided it to be a ball. Then, as the next one came in, Buck shut his teeth grimly, braced himself, and put all he had back of the bat which he swung viciously. There was a resounding crack and Buck knew he had hit well, even as he dropped the stick and raced for first. The crowd was on its feet.

"Come on home, Buck! Come on home!"

There was a thudding of feet around the bases as Red sped onward, as Hanson sped onward, and as Buck Chester sped onward. On and on and on while the frantic left fielder of the cadets was racing after the ball.

On and on and on! Home, in one, two, three order, with a trio of runs scored which put

Broxley ahead by two runs. Oh, there was great rejoicing!

Nor was this all. For after Big Noyes struck out Larry singled, Fred got a two-bagger and then, with a double by Ferg Plant, two more runs were added to the score of Broxley, making their total, when the side was retired with Ferg dying on second, an even dozen runs.

“Now, Larry, if you can hold them down, we go home winners!” cried Buck, as his brother went to the box.

“After your homer I’ve got to do it or quit,” was the answer.

Larry did his work well. There was only one hit off him in the closing half of the ninth, and twice he pulled out of holes by the use of his fadeaway, so that when the final out came not a man of Tapper had crossed home plate and the final score stood: Broxley 12, Tapper 8. It was as fine a victory as had ever been won, and Buck and Larry Chester were given their share of well merited praise.

When Buck and Larry, in accordance with plans previously made in talking with the girls, were walking over to the stand to see Nell and Flora, they became aware of something untoward happening near the seats of their two pretty friends. There was some commotion, and, even as the brothers started to run forward, they saw an elderly gentleman rather

forcefully thrust Clem Carey and Taffy Stutz out into an aisle. At the same time the gentleman exclaimed loudly:

"Get away from those young ladies, you loafers! You've made a nuisance of yourselves all during the game! I'll call an officer if you don't take yourselves off!"

"Oh, is that so?" sneered Clem.

In spite of his bold words, Clem Carey moved off down the aisle, followed by Taffy, and by the time Buck and Larry reached the place where the girls stood, the two were lost in the departing crowd.

"What happened?" asked Buck.

"Did those fellows annoy you?" asked Larry.

"Oh, it wasn't anything, really," said Nell.

"Clem just got a little fresh," was Flora's version. "But that nice gentleman," and she pointed to the elderly man who had reached the ground by this time, "took our part effectually."

"I wish I'd been here!" growled Buck.

"Oh, indeed? Well, I'm glad you weren't!" exclaimed Flora. "We don't want to be involved in a fight, thank you!" Her eyes sparkled mischievously and Nell was smiling tantalizingly as she faced Larry.

"How about to-night?" Larry asked, for he and Buck had asked the girls to go to a picture

show, and wanted to be sure that engagement still held.

"All right. What time will you be over?" asked Flora.

"About eight."

"Good! We'll wait for you. And please, please, don't say anything about what happened just now!" begged Nell.

"Well, all right, we won't," promised Buck, with a meaning look at Larry.

CHAPTER XX

CLEARED IN TIME

BECAUSE they had delayed to talk with the two girls, Buck and Larry Chester were not ready in time to ride back to Broxley in the bus containing the other players. They had to take seats in one which carried some substitutes and a number of cheering students. It was not until they were in their places and the bus was moving off that the Chester boys noticed Clem Carey and Taffy Stutz among the crowd.

At once Buck's bronzed face flushed and Larry knew without being told that there was going to be trouble with his hot-tempered brother. Buck, leaning forward to get Clem's attention, said:

"The next time you want to annoy young ladies, wait until I get there to see the fun."

"What do you mean?" snapped Clem.

"You heard me the first time!" declared Buck. "And that goes for you, too, Taffy!"

"Oh, close your trap!" advised Taffy, with a laugh in which several of his friends joined.

"I'll close yours and your eyes too, if you

say that again!" protested Buck, starting from his seat.

"Oh, you'll do wonders, you will!" sneered Clem.

"I'll do something to you, and right now, you big stiff!" yelled Buck, losing all hold on his temper. "Hey, stop the bus!" he called to the driver. "I'm going to show this pill how it feels to stack up against something besides girls."

"Oh, is that so?" mocked Clem.

"Yes, that's so! Let me out! I'll push his face in!" cried Buck, now raging.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" cried Larry, catching hold of his brother. "Sit down! Keep quiet!"

"Not until I punch him!" objected Buck.

"Let me go!" cried Clem, to some of his friends who were holding him down. "I'm not afraid of him!"

"You will be when I get through with you!" shouted Buck. "Take your hands off me, Larry! I'm going to fight him!"

"No, you're not! Sit down and keep quiet!" ordered the pitcher. "Listen, Buck," he went on in tense, but lower, tones. "All Clem and Taffy want is to get you into a fight or into some trouble so you'll be barred from the nine. Don't play into their hands. This is a put up job, I think."

"Yes?" asked Buck, getting this new thought.

"Sure! Take it easy!"

As usual, Larry's calm words and manner had an effect on his brother, who allowed himself to be pulled back into his seat. The bus driver, naturally not wanting to get into trouble with the school authorities, had not stopped and, as the vehicle rolled along, the atmosphere within became calmer.

"Don't let him get you angry in that way," Larry went on, as Buck quieted down. "It won't do you a bit of good."

"Well, I'm not going to let him insult the girls."

"Maybe he only razzed them a bit. They didn't seem to mind very much. That old gentlemen might have taken offense too easily. But one thing is sure. Clem and his crowd will do anything to get us put off the team or stopped from playing. So don't let them get the chance."

"Well, all right, if you say so," grumbled Buck. "But I'd just like to get one good crack at him."

"Wait," Larry advised. "You'll get the chance some day."

Though there was no open break between the Chester boys and the bully's crowd that day, the incident in the bus gave Clem Carey a

chance he had been looking for. His mind had seized on something Larry had said to the effect that it was desired to get Buck into trouble so the lads from Tooksville would be ineligible for the nine. This had not been Clem's intention in picking on the girls nor in the subsequent quarrel in the bus, but now he resolved to seize the opportunity that chance had put in his way.

"Look here, Taffy," said Clem that night. "I've thought of a way to get those birds in Dutch."

"What birds?"

"Oh, you know—those pills from the tank town, Buck and Larry."

"What are you going to do?"

"Listen! You know next Saturday they play the game with Elmwood Tech. It'll be a hard game—our school hasn't beaten Elmwood for five years back, I believe. In fact, I don't remember when we got a game from them. Certainly never in my time."

"Well, what of it?"

"Next Friday night," went on Clem, "the freshies will try to take the old bell down out of the ivy tower and hide it in one of their rooms."

"Sure, we did it when we were freshies."

"Yes. Well, there's a rule now that if the bell is taken down this year or any year after

this, those caught doing it will be campused for a month and not allowed to play in any school games."

"I'm still listening, but I don't see yet what it means," said Taffy. "I know there's a rule of the Athletic Association that any fellow caught in these school pranks can't play. But you can bet none of the regular nine will be fools enough to go in for the bell racket, even if the freshies who aren't on the teams do it. And they will—they always do. Sometimes they get caught and sometimes they don't. But how will that keep Buck and Larry off the nine?"

"I'll tell you." What Clem told his crony was in a whisper.

The night of the annual bell-stealing, as it was called, came, after days of hard practice on the part of Buck and Larry and others of the nine in preparation for the annual contest with Elmwood Tech. The taking of the bell was a lark always looked forward to by the freshmen, and the getting of it out of the ivy-clad tower was followed by a surreptitious supper. There was no opposition on the part of any of the other classmen to the taking of the historic bell from the ivy-covered tower. But the academy authorities were tired of having the bell taken down, lost for several days, and either left on chapel steps or some other place,

when it was necessary to hire men to hang it again.

So Dean Cartright had promulgated a rule, for the first time in effect, that any freshman caught involved in the bell-stealing would be campused and barred from athletics. Knowing what this meant, the Athletic Committee had forbidden members of the various teams from participating in the frolic.

But the frolic came off, just the same; though, to the credit of the members of the baseball team, none of them had any hand in the affair.

It was, therefore, a great shock when the bell was found by a searching committee, headed by the dean, in the room of Buck and Larry and Fred soon after it had been stolen.

Those three students had gone to the town movie theater, unaware of the fate hanging over them. On their return they found the school buzzing with excitement. They also discovered in their room a note from the dean, requesting their attendance in his office.

"What for?" asked Buck, as he and Larry and Fred read the paper.

"The bell was found in your room," several students volunteered.

"In our room! Why, we didn't have anything to do with it!" cried Larry. "We were at the movies."

"Tell that to the dean," chuckled a senior. "That's the usual story."

"But look here!" broke in Fred. "Something's wrong!"

"You're in wrong, if you ask me," the senior said. "Better go and have it out with the dean."

"We will!" decided Larry, suspecting a trick, but not knowing how to prove it.

The dean was rather coldly sarcastic.

"You know the rule," he said. "The bell was found in your room. It is *prima facie* evidence of guilt. You will, therefore, remain on the school grounds for the next month and not take part in any games. That's all."

"But see here, Dean Cartright—I beg your pardon, but I mean we've got to play Elmwood to-morrow!" cried Buck.

"The game will take place, as usual, I suppose," said the dean. "But you three cannot play. That is final. I bid you good night."

Buck would have expostulated angrily, but Larry calmed him and got his brother and Fred out of the room. They found several of the nine outside, for the bad news had traveled fast.

"Well?" asked Big Noyes.

"Canned!" was Buck's answer.

"You mean you can't play to-morrow?"

"That's it."

"Great Cæsar!" cried Red. "Why, that's

rotten! Here's the best chance we ever had to beat Elmwood, and you fellows can't play!"

"You've got a nine without us," Larry said, meanwhile trying desperately to think of some way out and of proving that he and the other two had had no part in the prank.

"Yes, I know," Big said. "We have a nine. But Charlie Coleman isn't in form to pitch, and Ramsey, who'll have to catch, is laid up with a sprained thumb. We sure are in rotten!"

"Look here, Larry, let me have this straight," said Frank Bergen, one of the Athletic Committee who had been summoned when the affair became known. "Did you have anything to do with taking the bell?"

"Not a thing!" cried Buck and Larry together, and Larry added:

"We were all three at the movies, and we can prove it."

"No doubt you can prove you were at the show," said Frank. "But the exact time the bell was taken isn't known, so it can be argued that you might have had a hand in taking it before or after."

"But we didn't!" cried Buck.

"Yet it was found in your room."

"Then somebody put it there!" asserted Fred.

"Who?" asked Frank.

The Chester boys were silent. They had their suspicions, but was it right to speak of

them? What about the honor of the school? What about being yellow and squealing? Buck and Larry looked at each other and kept silent.

"Well," went on Frank, "it's a tough break, but it can't be helped. You'll have to do the best you can with substitutes in their places," and he nodded at Buck and Larry and Fred. "If there's any way of proving you didn't have anything to do with taking that bell, go to it!" he advised, turning to Buck and Larry.

"And fast!" added Big Noyes. "For if you can't pitch for us, Larry, we're going into the hole again."

"I don't see how we can prove we didn't do it except by our words," Larry said.

"It's that stinking—" began Buck angrily, but Larry put his hand over his brother's mouth and muttered:

"Cut it out!"

Buck subsided.

There was quiet but seething excitement in Broxley until late that night, and the next morning, when few classes were held, it was renewed. It was a tense, desperate time, and though Buck and Larry and Fred tried every way they could think of to acquit themselves, even to examining with fiction-detective minuteness every part of their room, there were no clues to show who had placed the bell there.

There was nothing to prevent Buck and Larry and Fred from indulging in morning

practice with the nine, though, of course, under the dean's rule they could not leave the grounds to journey to Elmwood, where the big contest was to take place. So the three suspects donned their uniforms and went out on the diamond. But their hearts were not in their work, and none could blame them.

"Well, I guess here's where we go to get dumped again," remarked Big Noyes as the practice ended and the team, minus the three new players, prepared to leave for Elmwood. "It sure is a tough deal."

"Rotten!" agreed Red Browning. "We were all set to get at least an even break with Elmwood this term, and this had to happen! Rotten luck!"

"Here comes Gimpy!" suddenly exclaimed Red, pointing to an elderly man, known by that nickname because of a limp. He was a handy man about the place, attached informally to the dean's office and often carrying his messages. He hurried to the group of ball players.

"Dr. Cartright's compliments, young gentleman," said Gimpy. "And will the two Chester boys and Fred Margot report to the dean's office?"

"What for?" asked Buck bitterly. "Does he think we'll try to sneak away and play in spite of his orders? Tell him nothing doing!"

"It's the dean's orders that you are to come to his office," repeated Gimpy.

"Come on," said Larry, with a bitter laugh. "If he doesn't trust us it's up to us to show him something different."

The three moved away, followed by the anxious eyes of the other players.

"Well, we might as well get started," suggested the Big Noise. "Here come the busses."

The team was getting into the vehicles when three excited figures came running from the direction of the dean's office.

"It's Buck and Larry," reported Red.

"And Fred Margot!" added Jeff Dodge. "Wonder what happened?"

They learned a moment later.

"We're cleared, fellows!" yelled Larry. "It's all right!"

"We can play!" shouted Buck. "Oh, boy! And how I will hit 'em!"

CHAPTER XXI

A GLORIOUS GAME

“WHAT happened?”

“How’d the dean come to let you off?”

“Who put the bell in your room?”

These were only a few of the questions shouted to Buck and Larry Chester and Fred Margot, as, almost at the last minute, they leaped into the auto bus that was to take the nine to Elmwood.

“It was like this,” Larry explained. “The dean was as nice as pie. He said he was sorry a mistake had been made and he regretted it very much. But he said the evidence at first seemed very clear against us and he couldn’t do anything else under the circumstances.”

“Which he couldn’t,” agreed Buck.

“But for cats’ sake, what happened?” roared the Big Noise.

“I’m coming to that,” said Larry. “The dean said it had been found out that we were correct in what we said. It seems one of the seniors down the hall on our floor was in his room when a bunch of fellows sneaked up with the stolen bell. This senior, the dean didn’t

say who he was, looked out of his room and saw the bunch in front of our door. He heard somebody say our door was locked (which it was) and somebody else said he'd use a skeleton key to get it open, as he had one. So they took the skeleton key, opened our locked door, slipped the bell in, locked the door, and went away. The student who saw all this heard that we were barred from playing only this morning, and he at once went to the dean and told him that he was positive that none of us was in the bunch bringing the bell in."

"Good!" cried Big Noyes.

"And the dean said," went on Larry, "the fact that a skeleton key had to be used to open our locked door made certain that it wasn't any of us, for of course we'd have had our own key. So he said that cleared us and he was glad of it."

"But who put the bell in your room?" asked Red Browning.

"It was Clem Carey and his bunch, the dirty rat!" cried Buck.

"We haven't any proof of that, and it's better not to make any charges," said Larry. "The fellow who told the dean didn't mention any names. He really couldn't you know, as long as he made it clear we weren't guilty."

"I guess that's right," agreed several. "He couldn't squeal, as long as he cleared you fellows."

"Who was this fellow that came to the front so nicely?" asked Red. "I mean, the senior who saw the bunch put the bell in."

"The dean didn't say. It's just as well we don't know who it was," replied Larry, and the others agreed with him.

The big fact which mattered was that now the regular team could play Elmwood. Though the result was still in doubt, yet Broxley had a better chance than before Buck and Larry and Fred were campused.

So there was a jolly crowd in the bus that was soon journeying toward the technical school where a big crowd was already gathering to witness the annual contest. The fact that Broxley had never won the baseball battle did not greatly matter, for the game was always a colorful one and sometimes it was close enough to make it a real thriller.

"Has Broxley never won?" asked Larry of some of the boys as they neared the grounds.

"Never!" was the answer.

"How long have the two nines been playing?" asked Buck.

"About ten years."

"This is the tenth," said Big Noyes, who had looked up the matter.

"Then it ought to be a good date on which to break the hoodoo!" suggested Buck.

"If it can be done," murmured Red.

"We'll play our hardest," resolved Larry,

and his eight fellow players were in accord with this.

"Batter up!"

The game was about to start, and as Dave Browning went to the plate there was a tenseness that ran through both teams. The fame of Buck and Larry had already spread to Elmwood.

The contest started off ordinarily enough with two hits off George Sherry, the Elmwood pitcher, in the first half of the initial inning. Then, by hard work, Buck got a nice two-bagger, and one run was tallied for Broxley.

"That's more than we did last year," observed the Big Noise, as his team went to the field.

"Well, it's a good start," remarked Larry, pulling off his sweater and going to the box.

He had practiced hard during the previous week, and his arm did not hurt him so much now when he indulged in the fadeaway. But as he went out to start the second half of the first inning Mr. Pomeroy warned him:

"Spare it, Larry! Go easy on the fadeaway!"

"I will!"

Deciding to feel out his opponents for a couple of innings, Larry did not use his new delivery at all either in the first or the second inning. He wanted to get warmed up and be sure of himself. So he shot in fast, straight

balls, varying them with drops, ins, and outs, and he had a measure of success.

Larry struck out several players, but walked two, which was not so good, and when the third inning went into the second half, with the score 2 to 4 in favor of Elmwood, he decided it was time to begin to use his fadeaway.

It was Andy Ackerman, the husky right fielder of Elmwood, whom Larry picked for his first victim. John Shaw, who preceded Andy, had got a two-base hit and was eager to come in. But now began the real game, and there was some fine playing on both sides.

"Ball!" yelled the umpire at Larry's first delivery to Andy. It had started as an in, but got away from Larry.

"Now for it!" murmured the pitcher. He wound up for the fadeaway, sent it in with more skill and control than he had yet shown, and Andy bit at it eagerly. There was no need for the umpire to call a strike. Everyone saw Andy miss by a foot.

"Atta boy!" cried Fred, as he tossed the ball back to Larry.

"I think I've got it!" exulted the pitcher. He shot in a fast one, right over the plate, but Andy did not move his bat.

"Strike two!" cried the umpire.

"Hit the next for a homer!" Andy's friends advised him, as he glared at Larry.

But the new pitcher was on his toes, and once

more, though it was rather risky, as Mr. Pome-roy told him later, he shot in the fadeaway. Again Andy missed it clean.

"You're out!" came the call, and the bat was dashed to the ground.

"By golly, this team has a pitcher who can pitch!" exclaimed more than one in the stands, for Andy was known as a good hitter.

"He's a new player," was the comment. "If he can last he may come through. But can he last?"

Time alone would tell.

For one moment in the last half of the third it looked as if there might be a break against Broxley, for Lou Traynor, who followed Andy, bunted, beat it to first, and so advanced John Shaw to third. But Larry did not worry. There were two out, for Paddy Haggerty, who had preceded Shaw, had fouled disastrously. But when Bill Hagney got up with two men on base and it looked as if there was a good prospect of at least a run, Larry went at his work with method and as coolly as a veteran.

He gave Bill such a crossfire of ins and outs, with the fadeaway slipped over at the critical moment, that Bill struck out, retiring the side, with never a run in and John and Lou dying on their bags.

"Great work, Larry!" congratulated Buck, as he ran in from center.

"You did it well," added Mr. Pomeroy. "But cut out the fadeway in the next two innings, Larry. They might get on to it."

"All right, I will."

In the fourth inning Broxley got a run, and in their half of the same frame Elmwood was again held scoreless, though there were two hits. Larry Chester was pitching as he had never pitched before.

"Say, this is a game!" cried many who had come, expecting to witness the usual triumph of Elmwood. "What's happened to Broxley?"

"Some new players. Well, they surely needed them!"

From where he was sitting in the stand with Taffy Stutz and Lon Snoper, Clem Carey muttered:

"How did those fellows get loose?" meaning Buck and Larry and Fred.

"Something went sour, I guess," admitted Lon. "But Elmwood will win yet."

"I hope so," muttered Clem. "If they don't I'm out!" and he slapped his pocket suggestively.

"I bet on Elmwood, too," muttered Lon. "You said it was a sure thing they'd win without Larry to pitch."

"Well, I didn't think they'd get loose!" snapped Clem. "Something went flooey."

"Something else will go flooey, too, if I don't

clean up on this game," sighed Taffy. "I bet my last cent on Elmwood from what you told me, Clem. If I go broke——"

"Oh, shut up!" rejoined the bully. "Don't cry yet. The game isn't over."

"But it's the end of the sixth and look at the score!" cried Taffy. "Elmwood 6 and Broxley 6. It's the first time we ever tied 'em this far along in the game. What's going to happen?"

"Oh, shut up!" roared Clem, who was fast losing his temper.

It was true. By a magnificent burst of playing, Broxley had managed to get two runs in the fifth and one in the sixth. In these same frames Elmwood got one run each in the fifth and the sixth. Larry was working his fadeaway sparingly but at the right moment and was keeping the hits of his rivals well scattered and down to a minimum.

The Elmwood players were fighting desperately. They could not understand this new spirit that had come over their usually beaten rivals. Their best batters suddenly found themselves fanning air.

"What has that new pitcher of theirs got?" asked Tom Jigg, the catcher.

"Believe me, it's a teaser!" panted Wat Blanchard, the second baseman, as he came back from fanning wind with all his might.

The seventh inning saw another run added to

Broxley's score, while in that same frame, though he had the bad luck to walk one man, Larry didn't allow a hit and struck out the next three after the walker in rapid succession, amid a burst of applause from the stands.

Then came the eighth, with such hard playing on Elmwood's part that Broxley could not get a man over. But, for the same reason, neither did Elmwood, so that when the ninth inning opened the score was 7 to 6 in favor of the visitors, something that had never before happened in the history of the two schools. Clem Carey squirmed on his seat and thought of his pocketbook, meanwhile avoiding the reproachful glances of his cronies, who, like himself, had bet against their own school.

The ninth opened rather badly for Broxley, for Red Browning struck out, and it began to look as though George Sherry, the Elmwood pitcher, was coming back. But Hanson Allen got up next and hit a pretty single which put him on first. Once more Buck Chester came to bat.

"Climb the game now!" came the cry. "A home run, Buck!"

"A three-bagger will do," answered Buck.

That is just what he got, after two strikes had been called on him. He hit the ball a mighty wallop, sending it deep in center, and raced to the last bag while Hanson Allen got across the plate.

This made the score 8 to 6 in favor of the visitors, and they still had some chances. Big Noyes died on a pot fly and Buck was teetering on third when Larry came to the bat. His rival pitcher tried his best to get him out. As it was, Larry hit two fouls, one of which was almost caught, and then, at the critical moment, he got just what he had been looking for and rapped out a pretty single which scored Buck. But that ended the rally of the Broxley lads, for soon after that the inning ended, with Larry on base.

But the score was now 9 to 6 in Broxley's favor, and if Larry could hold the other team down or limit them to two runs, the great game would be a glorious victory for Broxley.

How he did it, Larry could hardly remember afterward. But he struck out Bud Munrow, the first man up, without using the fadeaway. Then Paddy Haggerty got a hit, and John Shaw came up. Larry fed him a couple of ins, allowed two balls, and suddenly whipped in the fadeaway, after two strikes, one a foul, had been called.

The ball lost speed and nestled neatly in Fred's mitt as a result of Larry's fadeaway. There were two out and Broxley was still three to the good when Andy Ackerman, with a grim look on his face, stepped to home plate.

Larry thought he had this batter pretty well estimated. But there is nothing certain in

baseball. Deciding to risk the fadeaway again, Larry dished it up as his first offering and Andy clouted it for a fare-thee-well. Away out toward center it sailed. But Buck had seen it coming and had started to run back in time. The batter was legging it for first and the crowd was standing up watching the race between Buck and the ball.

“Get it, Buck! Get it!”

“Come on! Come on, Andy!”

Buck Chester won, for while the runner was yet ten feet from first, the center fielder reached up and plucked the ball out of midair, a one-handed catch that was greeted with a roar of approval. It was a catch that spelled the downfall of Elmwood and the rising of Broxley, a glorious victory, sweet because of the nine lean years that had gone before.

Yes, it was a glorious victory.

CHAPTER XXII

ANXIOUS DAYS

"GREAT work, boys! Great work!" Mr. Pomeroy called to his team, which he had carefully coached, hoping for some such result as this.

"Fine pitching, Larry!"

"I did my best, Mr. Pomeroy."

"And you worked the fadeaway well." This last the coach whispered, for the fewer who knew about Larry's ability to deliver this ball the better for his team. "And that was a pip-pin of a catch of yours, Buck," went on the coach. "A peach!"

"I nearly missed it," answered the center fielder, with a grim laugh as the team hurried to the dressing rooms. They were bubbling with joyful excitement.

Never before had Broxley beaten Elmwood, and it was something to crow over. The Elmwood players were almost in a daze at the unexpected outcome of the game, but they were true sportsmen and cheered their victorious rivals to the echo.



BUCK HIT THE BALL A MIGHTY WALLOP.

Larry's Fadeaway.

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"Well, we won," remarked Lon to Clem, as the glum trio left the stand.

"Won! What do you mean?" growled Clem. "I lost a lot of money."

"Oh, so did I," said Taffy, with a more cheerful grin than might have been expected of him.

"So did I," added Lon Snoper ruefully. "And all because Clem told us to bet against our school. I'm not going to do it again, not by a jugful."

"Oh, shut up, you big boob!" snapped Clem. "You didn't have to bet if you didn't want to. You didn't bet with me."

"No, but I thought I'd make something. I need the money."

"So did I," grumbled Clem. "And I will next time, too!"

"What do you mean?" asked Lon in a low voice.

"I mean I'll fix things so Broxley won't beat Lakeside when they play two weeks from today," answered Clem. "I'll see that the Tooksville bunch don't have any part in that game, and we'll make enough by betting that Lakeside will win to make up for what we've lost here. Leave it to me."

"Are you going to bet against Broxley when we play Lakeside?" Taffy inquired, with a look of interest.

"I sure am!" snapped back Clem. "And

it will be a sure thing. Leave it to me! But you fellows will have to help."

"I'll see what it is first," remarked Lon.

"Well, I'll do almost anything to get my money back," Taffy stated. "What's the game, Clem?"

"Tell you later. Come on now, let's get away from here."

The bully and his cronies sneaked away while the victorious nine was receiving the congratulations of the wildly happy Broxley fans, who had not expected to celebrate such a victory as this. All the way back to Broxley, there were songs, cheers, and jolly shouts.

"Everybody out for practice. Scrub game at four o'clock!"

This notice on the bulletin board told the members of the nine that strenuous days were ahead. It was posted the Tuesday following the great victory over Elmwood on Saturday. When Buck and Larry and their mates had assembled on the diamond, Mr. Pomeroy said:

"Now, boys, I needn't tell you what's ahead of you. A week from this Saturday you play Lakeside. It's the last game of the season, and I want you to win it just as you won against Elmwood.

"Now don't say you can't do it or that Broxley has never beaten Lakeside. I know that

last fact as well as you do. And I know they have a crackerjack pitcher, but I'm going to say, and I don't believe I will be challenged, that we've got a crackerjack pitcher ourselves."

"By golly, that's right!" roared Big Noyes.

"You bet it is!" shouted a number of others enthusiastically.

"He sure fooled Elmwood!" cried Red Browning.

"And he'll fool Lakeside!" predicted Mr. Pomeroy. "Oh, yes you will!" he went on, as he saw Larry modestly shaking his head in doubt. "All you have to do is to practice hard, just as all the other fellows are going to do. Aren't you?" he appealed to them.

"Sure!" came in a hearty, ringing chorus that did the heart of the coach good to hear.

Then began the game with the scrubs, and it was a hot one from start to finish. Never did the regulars allow their friendly opponents to get away with anything, though, to make his boys get up on their toes, the coach gave the benefit of all his knowledge to the scrubs. In this way he brought out latent powers of the regulars, and the regulars won by a good margin.

"Play that way against Lakeside and you'll win," predicted Mr. Pomeroy at the close of the contest. "And you, Larry, I want you and Fred out here by yourselves to-morrow morn-

ing at your first free period for some individual coaching."

Broxley worked hard for the coming contest, worked out in the open and sunlight. But against the team and against Buck and Larry were those who were working in the dark. And these were Clem Carey and his two cronies.

But there were other matters to be reckoned with. It was now June, and anxious days were at hand; the anxious days of the final examinations.

So, though practicing for the great contest with Lakeside, Buck and Larry and their chums studied hard in preparation for the finals. The young pitcher was acquiring a better mastery over the fadeaway, and Buck had improved in his batting, while Fred Margot was declared to be the best catcher Broxley had ever had behind home plate.

"Did you see that notice, Buck?" asked Larry one morning, as they were hurrying to one of the last classes before the final tests.

"What notice?"

"On the billboard," Larry said. "Anybody who gets below seventy-five in a final exam can't play on any of the athletic teams."

"Is that so?" asked Buck, and there was an anxious note in his voice.

"Sure," his brother replied. "But I don't believe we need worry. It's the usual dope, I

guess. But I'm not going to let it worry me, are you?"

"No," replied Buck, slowly. "All I'm worried about is math and Latin."

"Those are my doubtful points," Larry agreed. "But I'm pretty sure we'll pull through. Maybe the tests aren't very stiff."

"Hope not," commented Buck. "I sure do want to play against Lakeside."

"Same here! Well, it won't be long now."

The time for the final examinations arrived. There was the usual anxiety on the part of the students, but Buck and Larry did not find serious difficulty with the earlier subjects.

"But look out for Latin and math," more than one candidate said to the boys from Tooksville. "They'll be fierce!"

"Don't fail, whatever you chaps do," begged Big Noyes of Buck and Larry. "Get a seventy-five or you can't play."

"We'll get it!" promised Larry.

When he and his chums went into the examination room on the last day of the tests when Latin was to follow mathematics, and when they hastily scanned the papers, something like a breath of relief went up from the three Tooksville lads.

"Not so hard as I feared," murmured Larry.

Heads were bent over desks, pencils scribbled, brows were corrugated with thought, and

scratch pads were frantically used to work out problems or bits of translations before setting them down neatly on the examination papers.

From where he sat with his two cronies, Clem Carey watched Buck and Larry and Fred like a hawk. For upper classmen took their tests in the same room with the freshmen, though of course the questions were different.

"I'll get 'em!" muttered Clem under his breath. "I'll get 'em this time!"

CHAPTER XXIII

A STUNNING BLOW

THERE was a more or less merry group of lads in the dining hall.

Those who were gay were those who felt reasonably sure that they had answered fairly correctly the majority of the questions in Latin and mathematics. Those whose faces bore traces of gloom were those who were not quite so sure.

Back and forth across the tables questions and answers about the recent examinations were tossed.

“Hey, Buck, how’d you answer that one about proving that the interior and exterior angles are equal to a right angle?” asked Fred, as he took a potato when one of the student waiters passed the dish.

“That was easy,” commented the center fielder, and he gave his solution. “But I got stuck on that last quadratic equation in algy.”

“Didn’t you get this answer?” Larry asked, reeling off a string of letters and figures.

“Yes, that’s what I put down,” said Buck. “But was it right?”

"Sure!" a chorus of others informed him, and he breathed more easily.

"How did you translate that passage from Horace? I have the Latin here but I couldn't make any sense of it," woefully announced Tim Blasdell as he read from a scrap of paper:

"Sic te diva potens Cypri
Sic frates Helenae, lucida sidera,
Ventorumaque regat pater
Obstrictis aliis praeter lapyga."

"There's something about a father in it, I know that much," said Harry Blake. "Pater—that's father."

"But what's the rest?"

"That," announced Larry, "is a poem Horace wrote wishing his friend Virgil a prosperous voyage as Virgil sets out for Greece."

"Holy cats!" moaned Tim. "Is that what you made of it? I thought it was something about spring. Oh, I'm sunk!"

"That poem on spring was in the second question," Buck said. "Don't you remember?"

"Remember?" moaned Tim. "I can't remember any of that rotten Latin! I wish Horace and Virgil and all the bunch had gone to Greece and got stuck there! It's a good thing I don't have to play on the nine or I sure would be canned!"

"How about you boys?" asked Big Noyes,

who came in when the meal was almost finished and looked at Buck and Larry.

"Oh, I guess we skinned through," Larry said.

"Good enough, if you passed Latin and math. The rest was easy. We sure want you to play against Lakeside."

The meal was almost over, but Clem, Taffy and Lon were not in their usual seats. Some of the boys remarked it, but attached no importance to it, though one or two jokingly suggested that if the three didn't hurry they wouldn't get much.

Meanwhile, if anyone had cared enough about it to watch, they might have seen Clem, Taffy, and Lon hanging around the rear door of the hall where the morning examinations had just been finished, and they might have heard Taffy saying:

"I think it's a rotten thing to do, Clem."

"Are you going to back out now?" fiercely demanded the bully.

"No, I'll go through with it because I said I would. But it's rotten, just the same!"

"Aw, don't get soft!" taunted Clem.

"We're all in the same boat. And I want to get back the money I lost on Elmwood."

"So do I," agreed Taffy.

"Then come on in and help," said Clem impatiently. "It won't take long, and when we get through they'll be queered all right."

"All the same, it's rotten!" muttered Taffy.

The three conspirators were late reporting for lunch, and though on ordinary occasions this was not considered an infraction of the rules, it was not supposed to be done on examination days. So when Clem and his cronies finally strode in they received a reprimand from the senior monitor.

"Whom do you lads think you are—one of those movie stars that you can come on the lot when you please?" sneered the senior.

"Sorry!" murmured Clem, and neither he nor either of his cronies resented the sarcastic rebuke.

As there was, and had been for some time, a mutual coldness between the Chester boys' crowd and that of Clem, no attention was paid by one to the other and soon after "the late Clem Carey," as the senior monitor mockingly dubbed him, came in, the three lads from Tooksville went out.

For there was another examination in the afternoon, not a difficult one, though the boys wanted to do a little "bone work" before going into the "torture chamber," as Buck called the test room.

"Well, that's that," Larry said, as he came out smiling toward the close of the day.

"Easy!" commented Buck.

"If I get as good a mark in Latin and math

as I did on that lit test, I'll be satisfied," announced Fred.

"Same here!" echoed Larry and Buck.

It was the next day, the anxious night having passed, that Buck and Larry and Fred received a message from Dean Cartright just as they were getting ready to go to baseball practice.

"Gee! Wonder what that means!" exclaimed Fred.

"Oh, he's going to tell us to play hard against Lakeside for dear old Broxley!" suggested Buck.

"Bunk!" said Larry and there was a worried look on his face as he and his companions went to the dean's office. There was a grim cast over the countenance of that official when, glancing up from some papers on his desk, he looked at the trio and announced:

"I am very sorry, young gentlemen, but all of you made a very bad showing in your Latin and mathematics examinations. You each fell below the stipulated seventy-five per cent. mark and, in consequence, you are ineligible for any further sports this term. I regret it as much as you do."

The news so stunned the three that for the moment they could say nothing.

CHAPTER XXIV

EXPOSED

LARRY CHESTER finally found his voice sufficiently to blurt out:

"But I say, Dean Cartright! I mean—I beg your pardon. But I'm pretty sure I answered most of the algebra questions correctly."

"And I thought I knocked my Latin for a fare-thee-well—I mean I did pretty well at it," stammered Fred.

"I was sure of my translation, or most of it," asserted Buck. "We were talking over some of the Horace passages at lunch, and——"

"Sorry, boys," and the dean smiled indulgently. "But the facts speak for themselves. Professor Square says he has rarely seen worse mathematic papers turned in than those you three gave him."

The trio looked at one another askance.

"As for the Latin," went on the dean, "Dr. Merwell says he doesn't see how you could so twist some of the passages. I have both reports here," and he indicated some papers on his desk. "You did very well in your other

studies, though," he added. "That's something."

"And yet we got below in math and Latin," murmured Larry. "I don't understand it."

"Too far below the seventy-five mark," stated the dean, "to permit of your playing on the nine any more this term. I'm sorry, young gentlemen."

"Oh, but say—look here—I beg your pardon!" cried Buck. "But we've got to play Saturday against Lakeside. It's a big game and——"

"I know it, and that makes me all the more sorry," interrupted the dean softly. "For I have heard what you have done on the nine, helping win the first victory ever recorded over Elmwood. But rules are rules. I can't make them for one set of you athletes and not for another."

"Oh, no, you have to play fair," agreed Larry, in a listless tone.

"That's why I sent for you," went on the dean. "This notification will be sufficient, I assume," he remarked. "You are on your parole not to indulge in any form of athletics during the remainder of the term. This is the only prohibition. That's all."

"And that's plenty!" muttered Buck, as he went out of the dean's office with the others.

"Good and plenty!" agreed Larry.

"Not to play on the nine in the big game

against Lakeside! Gee, that's tough!" sighed Fred. "And, by golly, I was sure I had passed my math!"

"And I'm sure I got at least eighty in Latin," said Larry. "There must be something wrong!"

But what it was they could not determine. Their friends, who had heard the news, gathered around the three as they went back to the diamond.

"What! Not going to let you three play against Lakeside on Saturday?" cried Big Noyes. "Wow! That's fierce! He's got to let you play! We can't beat that bunch without you!"

"Maybe you can," said Larry hopefully.

"No, we can't!" insisted Red. "Say, we've got to get up a committee of protest—a respectful committee of protest," he amended it, "and go to see the dean. Maybe he'll relent."

"That's a good idea," agreed Big Noyes. "We'll get the Athletic Committee to handle the matter, and there are some seniors on that. They'll know how to talk to the dean."

The next two days were hectic ones at Broxley. The committee was duly formed and waited on the dean, respectfully but firmly pointing out that if Buck and Larry and Fred did not take their accustomed places on the nine, Broxley would certainly lose to Lakeside, for the day of the game was only a little way

off and no substitutes could go in at this late hour and expect to make good.

"It's this way, Dean," said Art Miller, one of the seniors who had been selected to make the final appeal. "This is the best chance we ever had to beat Lakeside. They've always licked us—I mean to say they have always beaten us, just as Elmwood has. But this season, with the help of these new players, we tore the shirts off—I mean we gained a victory over Elmwood, and, by golly—that is, I mean, sir, we can lambaste these guys at Lakeside—I mean, sir, we have a very good chance to make them look like flat tires—I mean to say, win from them, if Buck and Larry are allowed to play."

"I'm sorry, Miller. I appreciate what it means to you, to them, and to the school. But scholarship must be maintained, no matter how much athletics suffer. The boys fell below the mark and can't play."

"That's the way it has to be, I suppose, Dean Cartright," sighed Art Miller. "But the queer part is the boys don't think they failed. They are sure they passed in both Latin and mathematics."

"You can't prove it by their papers," said the dean dryly, as Art, in the depths of despair, withdrew. The boys and their chums were waiting outside for the result of this last appeal.

"Haywire!" said Art, with a significant gesture. "We might as well reconcile ourselves to letting Lakeside have the game."

There was gloom in Broxley Academy that night, deep, thick gloom, as the Athletic Committee met and gave a reception for the baseball nine as a sort of pre-finale to the end of the season contest with Lakeside. But it was not a very jolly crowd.

Then, like lightning from a clear sky, something happened. Fred Margot, who had been wandering about the campus, too disheartened to attend the meeting, burst into the room as if the place were on fire.

"Fellows!" cried the doughty catcher, "I just heard some great news!"

"What?" asked Buck.

"I was down getting a soda in Jerry's," Fred went on, naming the favorite sweet-shop near the school, "when Clem Carey and his two pet dogs came in." They all knew who was meant. "I was in a corner where they couldn't see me, and I heard Clem say," reported Fred, "that 'the trick worked,' that 'the papers of all three got low marks' and that 'everything was all right.'"

"What did he mean?" demanded Larry.

"I don't know for sure," Fred went on. "But I think, boys, that Clem, or one of his cronies, did something to our exam papers so

we'd get low marks. By golly, that's what I think!"

"But how could he?"

"Listen!" proceeded Fred. "I was almost the last fellow to finish my Latin exam, and when I came out, after I had handed in my papers, I saw Clem, Lon, and Taffy hanging around the hall. They got through before I did. I didn't think much of it at the time, but later I remember I saw them go in as I came out. And this was after Bunion, who was in charge of the exam, came out himself. He left all the papers in his desk, you know. Now wouldn't it be easy for Clem and his bunch to sneak in, change some of our answers so as to put us in Dutch? Wouldn't it?"

"It's possible," admitted Larry.

"The dirty rat!" cried Buck. "I'm going to break his neck!"

"Go easy!" advised some of the cooler heads.

"This may have happened, but it's going to be hard to prove. Look here, Chester, both of you," said Art Miller, who had made the last, fruitless appeal. "It's within your rights, and you too, Margot, to go to Merwell and Square, the Latin and math profs, and ask to see your papers. That's a rule here. It's the privilege of any fellow who fails. It's giving him a square deal. Go and look at your papers and see what they show."

"Now?" asked Larry.

"Sure! Now. There's no time to lose."

Fortunately, the instructors roomed in the same residence hall, and though they were a trifle surprised at the excited visit Buck and Larry and Fred paid them a little later, they both readily agreed to get out the Latin and mathematic papers of the three for inspection.

"You see how it is," said Professor Square, as he pointed to the sheets which he spread out before the boys. "You seem to have been very uncertain of your answers. You each set down something, erased it, and substituted something else. And the sad part of it is," he went on, "that what you substituted was wrong."

"But I didn't erase any of my answers!" declared Buck, greatly surprised.

"Nor I!" exclaimed Larry.

"Nor did I," added Fred.

"The papers speak for themselves, young gentlemen."

"Someone else made those erasures," cried Fred.

The professor shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid that will be hard to prove," he remarked dryly.

It was the same story in the matter of the Latin papers. Questions had been answered, erasures made, and wrong translations put

where presumably, according to the boys, right words had been set down.

“There’s one way to settle this!” suddenly said Larry.

“How?” asked Professor Merwell, who had joined his colleague in granting an interview to the boys.

“We still have the scratch sheets we worked on in the examination,” Larry replied. “I mean the sheets we sketched our answers out on before we finally put them on our papers. If they show we had the right answers then, wouldn’t it almost prove that we knew enough about the subjects to get more than a seventy-five?”

“I should say that would be very good evidence,” admitted Professor Merwell.

“It would go a long way to convince me that there was something wrong here,” said Professor Square, reinspecting some of his erasures.

“We’ll show you!” cried Larry. “Come on, fellows!”

The scratch sheets were submitted. Each of the lads had worked out most of the problems and translations correctly. The loose sheets showed that. But the examination papers were palpably wrong.

“And it isn’t reasonable to think that we would have right answers on our scratch papers

and wrong ones on the papers we turned in, is it?" asked Buck.

"No, it isn't," admitted Professor Merwell. "I think we should bring this to the attention of the dean and Dr. North," he suggested.

"I agree with you!" said his colleague. "We'll communicate with you boys later."

No one went to bed early that night in Broxley Academy. Big news was impending. Rumors seethed back and forth among the dormitories. There was a coming and going between the various houses of the professors and the brick residence of Dr. North, the head master. Then Fred Margot was sent for, while Buck and Larry, surrounded by their friends, waited anxiously.

Then something like a bombshell burst in the school. Big Noyes and Red Browning, who had disappeared from the crowd, came hurrying back, fairly driving before them Lon Snoper and Taffy Stutz.

"It's all over but the shouting!" yelled Big Noyes.

"What do you mean?" asked Larry.

"We've caught these two crooks red-handed!" shouted Big. "Red and I heard them quarreling with Clem. We heard enough to understand that Clem and these two sneaked in, got the papers of Buck and Larry and Fred, changed them so they'd get low marks, and

then put them back in Bunion's desk at the noon hour. Didn't you, Lon?"

"Yes, that's what we did," the weak fellow fairly blubbered. "I didn't really do any of the changing, though."

"Clem made us go in and get the papers!" stammered Taffy. "He lost a lot of money on the Elmwood game and he wanted to get it back. We all did. But I didn't erase any of the papers. I just took some from the desk and handed 'em to Clem."

"That's all I did!" blubbered Lon. "And Clem made me do that. He changed the papers and handed 'em back to us."

"And we put them in the desk," added Taffy. "Gee, but we're sorry we did it! I'm not going to have anything more to do with Clem Carey!"

"Nor me, either!" wailed Lon.

"You dirty sneaks!" yelled Big Noyes. "You ought to have your faces caved in. But I guess you'll get what's coming to you, as it is. Come on in and tell this to the dean!"

"Will you let us go if we do?" pleaded Lon.

"Go and never come back to Broxley!" warned Red.

An intimation of what was pending kept the dean, Dr. North, and the two professors involved from being too startled at the confessions of Taffy and Lon. What Fred had

imparted, together with the evidence of the papers themselves, laid the foundation for what was to follow.

It was a most sordid business, a blackening of the fair name of Broxley Academy, and those who knew about it were pledged to secrecy. Retribution was swift. Lon and Taffy were at once expelled—that very night. As for Clem, he did not wait to be expelled. He ran away, for he heard that his tools had confessed.

“Boys, I cannot say how sorry I am that this occurred,” said Dr. North to Buck and Larry and Fred when midnight had come and the woeful mess was, in a measure, cleaned up. “A great injustice was very nearly done to you—and to the school. You may go now.”

“And can we—may we play ball?” asked Larry.

“If you have passed your Latin and mathematics, certainly.”

“All three have passed,” announced Professor Square who, with Professor Merwell, had hastily been going over the scratch papers and the examination sheets of the three, while the culprits were telling their sordid story. “We find that not one of them got below eighty-five and Larry Chester got ninety-five in Latin. A most commendable mark.”

“Hurray!” yelled Buck, clapping his brother on the back, and even Dr. North smiled.

"Boys, the nine welcomes you!" cried Big Noyes, as the crowd left the house of the head master.

"And now to lick the pants off Lakeside!" cried Red.

"Yes, and the shirts, too!" added Jeff Dodge. "Oh, what a game that will be!"

"If we can only win!" said Larry softly.

"Oh, we'll win! We must after this!" cried Big Noyes.

"Well, if my fadeaway will help, I'll shoot it in as long as my arm can deliver," mused the young pitcher as he and his roommates went to their room.

CHAPTER XXV

HARD FIGHTING

"WHAT a day!"

"Perfect!"

"And everything coming our way! Oh, boy! What luck!"

Buck and Larry Chester, hurrying across the campus toward the waiting bus that was to take them and their playing mates to Lakeside for the great game, were bubbling over with life and spirits.

"A close call, though," remarked Larry, as he recollected how nearly he and Buck and Fred had come to being kept out of the contest.

"Well, we got the breaks, that's all," Fred chuckled.

"And Clem and his crowd are broke!" exclaimed Buck. "I wonder if they'll ever come back?"

"To Broxley? Never!" declared Larry. "They're through!"

"I was hoping to get one good crack at him before he left," muttered Buck. "But maybe it's just as well."

"Better!" affirmed Larry.

"Well, boys, on your toes!" warned Coach Pomeroy, as the crowd started for Lakeside where the game was to be played. "I think you are going to win, but don't stop fighting until the last out is called on their side. Hop to it, now!"

The sun was shining warmly, there was just enough breeze to stir the leaves, and a more perfect day for baseball could not have been desired.

"Wow, what a crowd!" ejaculated Buck, as they ran out on the diamond for practice.

"Biggest gang we ever played in front of," commented Fred.

"If we can only win!" murmured Larry. "I hope that fadeaway of mine doesn't slip!"

"Don't you dare let it!" warned Buck. "Do you see who's here?"

"No! Who?"

"The girls!"

"Nell and Flora?"

"Sure! Who else?"

"Hot dog!" Larry gave a little jump up, whirled about and murmured: "I'm going to pitch my arm off!"

"Don't do that," laughed his brother. "At least not until we've won the game. Come on now. Let's get at 'em!"

A band played, there were cheers, laughter,

applause at snappy practice, and then the always thrilling cry from the umpire:

"Play ball!"

The game being on the Lakeside grounds, gave the home team the choice and, naturally, they picked to bat the last half of the innings. So the Broxley boys went to bat to start the game.

"Knock it over the fence, Red!" called Dave Browning's chums to him, as, swinging his bat, he walked to home plate.

"Sure thing!" he promised.

"There'll be no balls knocked over the fence in this game!" called Alex Ogden, the Lakeside pitcher, whose reputation, though he had but lately joined the nine, extended beyond the confines of his own school. He had a "nasty drop," was the rumor, "a wicked in," and a "bearcat of an out."

"Strike!" snapped the umpire after Alex's first delivery, and, being from Lakeside, that official's voice had a ring to it which might have meant: "Just what I expected!"

"Get the next one, Red!" called Buck. "You have two left!"

"Sure!" said Red. But a little later, having fanned the wind once and knocked a teasing foul which Chot Hunt almost got a fast, straight ball, which the umpire called a strike, came over the plate and Red was out.

"All right, Allen. Hop to it!" advised the coach.

Allen hopped, but not enough nor in the right direction, for after two strikes and two balls had been called, he hit a little pop fly which the pitcher caught almost without moving from the box.

"Two down! Two down!" went the cry about the field, as Buck Chester came to the bat.

"For cats' sake, Buck, do something!" pleaded Larry.

"I'll do it for your sake and Broxley's sake and my own sake, not to mention the girls' sake," laughed the center fielder, as he walked out to his ordeal. "But cut out the cats! There might be a black one and it would bring bad luck."

"Have it your own way," agreed Larry.

"Ball!" was the umpire's first decision.

Next Buck heaved mightily at an offering from the crafty Ogden, but he was inches under the up-shooting ball.

And then:

"Three strikes! You're out!"

There was a moment of silence, stunned silence, and a nice, round goose egg went up in the first frame for Broxley.

"Well, Larry," observed Mr. Pomeroy, as the pitcher stripped off his sweater and walked to the box, "it's up to you, in a way, to see that they don't get any runs, either."

"I'll try," was the answer.

Mun Clark was the first Lakeside batter to face Larry. The pitcher knew little of his opponents, so he had to feel them out, one after the other. He decided to hold back the fadeaway until he had seen each man at bat and could judge somewhat of them.

So he mixed his delivery to Clark, but had the misfortune, through being over careful perhaps, of serving him four balls, mixed with two strikes, and the first player walked, which did not send up the stock of Broxley much.

"Never mind. Get the next man!" called Red from first base to Larry.

Sam Saddler whanged out a pretty single, and when Jack Hensick bunted, getting out in the process, Clark, a fast runner, got to third. So when Lyle Miller got up, and also singled, the first run came in for Lakeside.

"Well, it couldn't be helped," mused Larry, but somewhat dolefully.

He played desperately hard, and so did his mates, with the result that though there was another hit, no more runs came in. But one run is more than none, any way one looks at it.

"Well, now we're going to do something!" cried Big Noyes, as he walked to the plate at the start of the second inning. "Watch me!"

For a moment or two after a ball and a strike had been called on Big, it began to look as if he might be something worth watching,

for he hit the ball fairly. But it had a twist on it and he was lucky to make first out of what, for a moment, seemed like a two-bagger. Then Larry came. He, somewhat to his surprise, also got a hit. Perhaps it was the courtesy of one pitcher to another.

But that was all Broxley did in their share of the second, for Margot, Plant, and Brady were struck out in that order, and quickly, leaving the two chagrined players to expire on the bags.

"Another goose egg!" murmured Larry, as he went to the box again. "Well, we're up against a real nine, all right. I'm going to work the fadeaway just once in this inning before I forget how to throw it."

So Larry led Case along with a judicious mixture of balls until, when it was three and two, he suddenly shot in his fadeaway and the Lakeside batter neatly fanned out, greatly to his own surprise, for the offering looked good.

"Well, it worked," thought Larry joyfully. "Now I'll let it rest for a while."

Larry was tempted to feed in his new style after Condon and Hunt had each got a hit, but refrained from doing so. But when Ogden, the pitcher, contrary to the customary usage, got a three-bagger, bringing in two runs, which made the score 3 to 0 in favor of the home team, Larry shut his teeth grimly and resolved to use the fadeaway no matter what happened to him.

The result was he struck out Clark and Saddler in quick succession, fooling each of them on his new delivery. They had been up before, so he knew something of their style.

Desperately as Broxley tried in her half of the third inning, she could do nothing, Dodge, Browning, and Allen being struck out quickly.

"I guess those weren't fairy stories they told about this Lakeside pitcher," remarked Fred, as, with another goose egg staring them in the face, Broxley took the field again.

"Lakeside!" exclaimed Buck grimly. "He's a regular Oceanside!"

A gleam of hope came to the visitors when Lakeside played her half of the third, for Larry struck out Hensick without the use of his fadeaway, and though Miller got a single, Tidd and Case went down to defeat, so that, for the first time in the game, a circle was all Lakeside had in her third frame.

"Now we're coming, Larry!" cried Fred, as he stripped off his protective armor.

"Well, they aren't invulnerable, anyhow," the pitcher admitted. "But where are our runs?"

CHAPTER XXVI

SAVING THE NINE

“HOME run, Buck! Home run!”

“You can do it, Buck!”

Thus pleaded scores of wildly enthusiastic Broxley rooters as Buck Chester, first to bat in the beginning of the fourth, hit the first ball a crack that sounded as if it would be good for a circuit of the bags. But the Lakeside center fielder was there, and though he could not quite make the catch, he got the ball so quickly that, playing safe, Buck got only to first. Thus did his vision of a home run diminish.

But things began to look brighter for Broxley when soon after that Big Noyes, Larry, and Fred each in succession got a hit, each good for but a single base, it is true, but these brought Buck in with the first run for his side.

“That’s the way to do it!”

There was almost a riot in the stands now, for there were three men on base and none out. It certainly looked as if Broxley’s chance had come. But they still tell the story in Lakeside of how Ogden did some of the best pitching in his career and struck out Plant,

Brady, and Dodge, just like that, with never a chance for a single Broxley player on base to come home.

This was a bitter pill to swallow, and, for a time, things looked black for the team from Broxley.

"If we couldn't score with that chance, what are we going to do?" asked Red gloomily.

"I'm still hopeful," said Mr. Pomeroy. "Larry hasn't cut loose yet."

"Well, if anything can be done to save the nine from defeat, I wish it would happen," sighed Big Noyes.

The game became hotter and tighter, in the sense that there were fewer errors as it went on. Lakeside got one run in her half of the fourth, making the score 4 to 1 in her favor.

In the fifth, two runs came in, and Broxley cut loose and her fans yelled their heads off. But Lakeside was not letting up, and got one. In the sixth neither side scored. Then, when the Broxley player walked to the plate as the next inning opened, Larry said:

"This is the lucky seventh. Something ought to happen."

It did. The score was 3 to 5 in favor of the home team when Allen went to the plate after Red Browning had struck out. Amid the pleadings of his friends, Allen waited, almost perilously it seemed, until it was two and three on

him. Then he whanged out a pretty single. Buck sprang into action a moment later.

"Now, Buck, a home run this time!" begged Larry.

"By golly, I'll do it!" promised the center fielder.

Ogden was pitching carefully. He gave Buck one ball, fooled him into striking at a teaser, and then, as he saw what he thought was just the kind of a ball he wanted, Buck struck it with all his force. Out and away sailed the horsehide, so far over and beyond center field that it was a certain home run from the start. Buck made it, galloping around the bags at his best speed, with Allen speeding home ahead of him, so that two runs came in, tying the score.

"Some hit!"

"Two runs in!"

"Oh, baby! Now we have a chance!" murmured Larry.

But the sensational rally of Broxley died then and there, for Big Noyes and Larry both struck out. However, the score was now 5 to 5.

In their half of the seventh Lakeside worked hard to get more runs. They got two men on bases, but then came an unusual play—a fly to Larry which he held though it stung him, a foul fly to Fred, and a short fly to Buck that he scooped in on a sensational run.

"Hurrah for Broxley!"

"That's the way to play ball!"

"No flies on those flies!"

The score was still five to five. The figures certainly looked good on the board. This was something that had not happened in a Broxley-Lakeside game for many years, old-timers said gleefully.

In the eighth inning neither side got a man over home plate. But in the first half of the ninth there was such a riot in the stands that many men's hats were broken and pretty girls, yelling for Broxley, were observed pounding the shoulders of men they had never seen before. Broxley got another run, putting them ahead. Buck brought it in after a single, followed by singles from others.

However, the triumph did not last long, for Lakeside went out and did likewise, so the score was again a tie.

There was seething excitement in the stands when it was seen that the game would go to ten innings.

"Buck, Larry, you've done more than any other fellows we ever had on the nine!" cried Big Noyes.

"We've got to do a lot more if we're going to win the game," said Larry. "And their pitcher doesn't seem to be going to pieces, though it looked so after those last four hits."

"But he struck out Plant, Brady, and Dodge

in succession," observed Fred. The unlucky trio had not yet had a hit in the game.

Hope and excitement seethed to a boiling point as the tenth inning opened with a tie score, and both teams still playing good ball.

"Now, Red, start things moving," his mates called to him, as he went to the plate.

"Do my best," he answered, with a shrug of his shoulders.

His best was good, for he got a pretty single. Allen followed with another. For a moment, it looked as if it were going to be a double play with two out, for the left fielder caught the fly Allen knocked, only he did not hold it and there was Red on second and Allen on first when Buck came up.

"Another homer! Oh, another homer!" yelled the crowd.

"They don't want much for their money," chuckled Buck, as he coolly tapped his bat on the rubber and faced Ogden.

"Strike!" snapped the umpire after the Lakeside pitcher's first delivery.

"Oh, the robber!" came in groans from the Broxley fans.

Buck set himself for a mighty heave if the next one should prove to be what he wanted. But it was away out.

"Ball!"

"Don't let him fool you, Buck!"

Ping! The bat hit the ball, but only for a

tantalizing foul, which the catcher fell down in trying unsuccessfully to retrieve.

"Never mind, Buck! You still have the big one left!"

"Ball!"

The excitement was fierce.

Whang!

That was more like it. A good, square hit, right on the nose.

"Oh, look at that ball go!"

"And look at Buck go!"

Both were going, the ball away out to left field, hopelessly beyond the player there, and Buck around the bases with Red and Allen speeding ahead of him.

"Come on! Come on! In with that ball!"

"Home run, Buck! Home run!"

"Red's in!"

"That puts us ahead one."

"Allen's in!"

"Two ahead. Oh, boy!"

"Throw that ball home!"

"Quick! Cut him off at the plate!"

The ball was coming in! Buck was coming in! It was a race!

"Slide, Buck! Slide!"

Buck slid in a cloud of dust. There was the thud of a ball on the catcher's mitt. The dust hid players and umpire for a second. When the wind had blown the little cloud away the

umpire stood with both hands extended, palms down.

Buck was safe! He had made another home run. Three tallies went up on the score board for Broxley. They had nine runs, three more than Lakeside.

“Hurrray!”

The racket that followed this sensational forging ahead of the visitors was terrific. The stands seethed with excitement. In front of the Broxley dugout their mates were clapping Buck and Red and Allen with mighty claps of joy and dancing with wild abandon.

“Hurrah for Broxley!”

“Now all we have to do is to hold Lakeside down and we win! Oh, boy, we win!” cried Big Noyes, almost smothering Larry in a bear hug. “Just hold them down.”

“Yes, that’s all. A mere trifle!” said Larry, laughing.

“Oh, boy, you can do it!”

What matter if nobody else on Broxley got a hit during the remainder of that tenth inning. Big Noyes, Larry, and Fred struck out, but they did not care. In fact, Larry had orders not to exert himself. He must save himself for a supreme effort, for he must hold Lakeside as near hitless as possible.

He did it. With his deadly fadeaway, he faced first Saddler and then Hensick and then

Miller, three of the heaviest and most crafty hitters on the home team. But Larry fed them a mixture of outs, ins, and drops, bringing in the fadeaway at the right time.

"You're out!" sang the umpire to Saddler, after that player had hit a foul and then fanned twice in succession at Larry's next offerings.

"You're out!" the arbiter of baseball fate announced to Hensick, who came to the plate determined to do or die. He died right there at home with a look of wonder on his countenance as he missed Larry's fadeaway completely.

"You're out!" called the umpire to Miller, who, in his rage and disgust, slammed his bat down so hard that it cracked.

For a moment no one seemed to realize what had happened. Then as it broke over the minds of the big crowd that Broxley had defeated her ancient and doughty rival by a score of 9 to 6, pandemonium broke loose. There was a rush from the stands of the wildly enthusiastic Broxley fans to overwhelm their players.

"Boys, you did it!" congratulated Mr. Pomeroy to Larry and Buck. To several he said: "Larry Chester is a coming wonder! I've never seen a school pitcher as cool as he was in such a tense situation. Everything depended on him and his nerve just now, and he came through clean. A wonder!"

"Buck's another. Oh, what a hit that was!" cried Big Noyes.

Sweet as this praise was to Buck and Larry, what they liked best of all were the smiles and the beaming eyes of two pretty girls who managed to cleave a way through the press to add their welcome praises to the congratulations of others.

"Are you two doing anything Monday evening?" asked Larry for himself and Buck of Nell and Flora.

"Yes," answered Nell, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"Oh," gasped Buck, rather blankly. "You are? I'm sorry."

"We are going out with you—if you'll take us," said Flora quickly.

"Which we won't do nothing else but!" cried Larry, joyfully.

There was a grand celebration on the Broxley Academy grounds that night, a celebration the like of which had never before been known. For, thanks to the advent of Buck and Larry, the school had closed a baseball season at the top of the list, humbling its two formidable and ancient rivals, something that had never before happened.

"You fellows are coming back in September, aren't you?" asked Big Noyes of the trio from Tooksville.

"Can't tell," Larry answered. "Uncle Henry may want us to help him invent an automatic catcher's mitt, after he finishes his rocket."

"Well, if you can invent anything better than your fadeaway, I want to see it," laughed Big Noyes.

"Sure we're coming back!" declared Buck. "This is the best place to play baseball I ever struck."

"And we certainly are going to play more baseball," added Larry.

How and where they did this remains to be related in another book.

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